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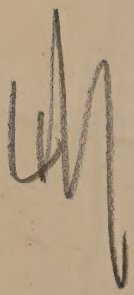

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M. O'CONNOR MORRIS

AUTHOR OF "TRIVIATA; OR, CROSSROAD CHRONICLES OF PASSAGES IN IRISH HUNTING HISTORY"

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS.

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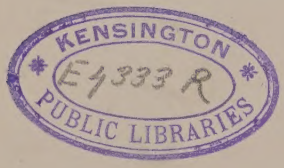

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TO LIEUT.-COLONEL

H.R.H. THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT

I respectfully Dedicate

(BY PERMISSION)

THESE EPISODES OF THE FOX DRAMA

AND THE DRAMATIS PERSONÆ AS PERFORMED ON

THE IRISH HUNTING STAGE DURING THE SEASON OF 1876–77,

IN WHICH H.R.H. TOOK MANY PARTS

AS PATRON, LEADER, FOLLOWER, AND OCCASIONALLY

AS "WALKING GENTLEMAN."

PREFACE.

THE indulgence of the public to my last record of a season's sport in Ireland, emboldens me to offer a second series of my letters to *The Field*, just as they appeared in that journal, without revision or alteration.

I have styled the volume "Hibernia Venatica," hoping thereby to place my country in a more pleasant and popular aspect than it could command as Hibernia Politica, Hibernia Paccata, or Hibernia Polemica.

The Greek, in the story, appealed from Philip drunk to Philip sober. The writer would follow the example of the outspoken Macedonian, and appeal from a community inflamed with the alcohol of sensational politics, frenzied by the phantasms of social rapine, and rabid with the virus of fanaticism—to a people united and harmonious in maintaining the chivalrous pastime of hunting, proud of the prestige of their county packs, jealous of their reputation, and, as in the case of the great body of the occupiers of the soil, submitting cheerfully to some discomfort and actual loss in furtherance of the common

sport. For 'tis no small praise, though only justice to the farmers of Ireland, to record that even in the dark years of famine and pestilence, fox-hunting, which hung on their approval, was never discontinued in that fearful cycle, and that when class feuds and antipathies were at their highest level, hunting, though never the pastime of the majority, ever held the even tenor of its way, unmolested, and practically, if negatively, encouraged.

Most countries can boast the present luxuries of high civilization, beautiful scenery, the pathos and tenderness of past associations, the treasuries of art, or the resources of spirit-stirring sport within their borders. Ireland, not altogether poor in the former categories, is eminently rich in the last desideratum, which marks out this beautiful isle of emerald sheen, thrown up like a terrestrial anadayomene as a waif from the seething Atlantic, to be a special paradise for hunters, a very Arcady of pursuit, from the golden vale of Limerick to the almost boundless grasseries of Meath the royal.

Switzerland, with its concordant discord of nature, is said to be the playground of Europe. Paris and Rome, Venice and Florence, will ever swarm with curious visitors so long as art is worshipped and history is enshrined in men's thoughts and memories; Scotland is yearly affected by migrant gunners, with prudent appreciation; while the salmonidæ annually turn Norway's rivers and fiords into very tides of Pactolus.

Ireland—where St. Patrick took up his parable from the wayside weed, the shamrock—alternately a bovine Bœotia,

like Basan, or a green Goshen for sheep and shepherds, offers hunting capabilities in its damp muggy climate, in its verdant vesture, and in its comparatively scanty rural population, such as no country in Europe, or, I believe, in the world, can parallel.

Modern civilization, which has banished the booming bittern and nearly exiled the screeching snipe, through the Deanston fabrics, and opened out the surface by four main trunk lines of rail, has hitherto proved, not, as in other lands, antagonistic, but most ancillary to the royal sport. Pursuit is thus made possible to the many, and scent and going are actually improved.

That a social revolution has been advancing like a spring tide in Ireland, must have been evident to all observers of the country during the past generation.

"A stranger fills the Stuarts' throne"

is true of many an ancestral park, hall, or castle, and many a settler in America, Brazil, or Africa. "Delicta majorum immeritus luit;" such delicta having been too lavish an hospitality, too reckless a profusion, too careless a reckoning with unjust factors and stewards of the Gospel type.

The hunting-field bears strong confirmation of this proposition. A few years ago, comparatively speaking, the squirearchy and their friends were the main elements at every meet; now they only leaven the masses of soldiers, professionals, "box for the season" folk, English visitors, Scotch farmers, horse copers, horse trainers, and

railway people. Three packs, of the highest fame and oldest traditions, are now presided over by "strangers;" natural aptitude and a coincidence of favouring circumstances having raised them to this exalted position in the county hierarchy; nor have any of the advenæ, so far as I can gather, failed to justify their election to the venatic presidency.

These circumstances, which some regret, but which, for my own part, I think of the very best augury for the future of the island, all show that Ireland is being very largely exploited as a hunting centre, just as her salmon fisheries have drawn thither multitudes rich in purse and full of leisure.

At this moment some four or five packs of hounds await each their "coming man," and will, I venture to predict, be none the worse managed if entrusted respectively to a stranger who has been entered in a good school, and whose zeal for hunting has led him away from home to—

"Spurn vain delights and live laborious days;"

whose ambition will be in showing and enjoying the sport he shows, untrammelled by local or hereditary prejudice, but judging men and things about him from that truest standpoint—his own unbiassed judgment and observation. As for nervous qualms, arising from the perusal of the rare land-begotten crimes, let no intending sport-quester in Ireland give the subject an anxious thought. No hunting man that I ever heard of was molested in Ireland. Like

the richly dight but unprotected lady in Moore's song, the hunting stranger will find lots of friends and protectors wherever he goes.

> "For though they are handy at pistol or stick,
> A sportsman they'll welcome and treat like a brick."

The importance of hunting to Ireland may be estimated by some of the following considerations :—

Absenteeism is allowed to be one of the sore plagues and ulcers of the island. Here is a certain balm and prophylactic.

Capital is still a huge desideratum. Hunting brings capital, not vast, perhaps, but considerable.

Nay, more, does it not hurl away absurd and ignorant prejudices of race and creed, and raise men to a common platform of good fellowship and good sportsmanship? "The man who this day sheds his blood with me, shall be my brother," said the great Plantagenet. Is not the community of peril and the sympathy of excitement a stronger cement than half the nostrums of political patchers and political pullers down, levellers up and levellers down?

There are drawbacks, 'tis true, to my ideal hunting-grounds—wire barricades gates and hedges so thickly that one or two districts are shunned by straight riders as is a harbour full of torpedoes by wary captains. In the days when Irish patriots harangued in the College Green forum, a great orator is reported to have said, "Every bush conceals a knave, eager for prey and flooded with iniquity" —alluding to three illustrious Irishmen of the day. In the

country I allude to many a bush does conceal a wire strand. Traps in other districts have improved the good old fox-hood of the country away, and the modern substitute is a poor creature, of much inferior type and prowess. While a few large-acred men prefer the pheasant of the minority, to the fox, the joy of the majority.

These things have been; these things will be; but all this notwithstanding, Ireland is an unrivalled hunting-field!

The old lady of tradition felt a thrill of historic rapture at the very sound of Mesopotamia. Meath is a modern Mesopotamia. The Tigris and Euphrates water no fairer vales than the Liffey and the Boyne. The Suir is more to us now than the effete though immortal streams of Simois and Scamander.

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HIBERNIA VENATICA.

I.

"——— Leporum
Secreta cubilia lustrat!"

"So ho! so ho! says the bold Marco!"

Rehearsals—Harriers and hare-hunting—Their popularity in Ireland—The Duke of Connaught in the field—Cubs and cubbing—Gaps in the hunting circle—A visit to Ashbourne.

THE hiatus between the close of the grouse and partridge campaign and the commencement of fox-hunting has been pleasantly filled up in Ireland by cub-hunting rehearsals, and much harrying of the timid hare. The latter sport is certainly far more generally popular—if attendance and numbers be any test—than the process by which young foxes are indoctrinated early into the sweet uses of adversity, and taught how to pluck the flower Safety out of the nettle Danger. Why this should be so does not exactly appear at a glance. Perhaps the early and intempestive hours, which keen cub-hunting masters have been always obliged to adopt in the month of September and early October, have something to do with the very thin ranks of their followers; perhaps the secrecy which is maintained about these matutinal forays may partially account for the fact, or an over-high ideal standard of the class

of horse which a fox-hunter should ride, when compared with the modester qualifications for a harrier hunter. Certain it is that the autumnal fields which accompany hare-hounds are almost plethoric in their dimensions, embracing individuals of most of the large studs who will soon be engaged in the more arduous and ambitious pastime; while farmers—apparently reckless of the fact that the gyrations of a hare in a narrow compass, when followed by a long *cortége* all out expressly for jumping and schooling purposes, is infinitely harder on crops and fences than the rapider whirlwind of a fox chase—swell the currant-jelly ranks to a most respectable host. So far as hunting has gone, the hare men have had much the best of it, for the *bouquet de lièvre* has been a more titillating stimulant to hounds than cubs, or even old foxes, have proved in this almost scentless season; and a few very animating chases have been enjoyed by some harrier packs already—notably by the Mallow, the Kildare, and the Newbridge hare hounds. The two latter, indeed, have proved a most valuable adjunct to the large camp at the Curragh and the cavalry regiment at Newbridge, training half the regimental horses and giving their owners a few capital gallops. As a matter of title, I believe I am correct in stating that the Kildare pack claim the greater part of the Curragh as their prescriptive arena; both packs, however, drive hares over the vast plain from the surrounding border lands; and game is so scarce, I hear, on the Curragh that the two packs meditating an odorous assault on the single hare of the grassy common might remind one of the two kings of Brentford distilling the sweetness of a single rose. His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught began his hunting experience in Ireland with Mr. Maxwell's harriers on Friday last in that beautiful reach of grass land around Kilbride which the Meath and Ward Union hounds have made a household word among hunting men. A fashionable and hard-riding assemblage drafted from the Dublin garrison, and the Ward Union men, mustered on the occasion; but the legend of the day might be "great cry and little wool," for fur proved extremely

scarce in the county we crossed, and the merry little muggers were very vociferous over the single short-running specimen that turned out for their delectation. If, however, there was little of pursuit, there was plenty of jumping, and the obstacles were of a kind that taxed the energy and capability of a good hunter, and not a few succumbed to the width of the ditches and breadth and height of the banks. The Duke of Connaught was admirably mounted on a long and low son of The Lawyer's—one of those exceptional sort of horses who catch the judge's eye at once in the prize ring, and are equally efficient and at home in the biggest countries. A pleasant half-hour among the good things at Priestown, the residence of a famous one-armed horseman and supporter of all sport, wound up a bad day's hunting; but if his Royal Highness, who has only just returned from the Calpe hunt with its rock-to-rock springing, witnessed a poor specimen of Irish hares and their hunting (a pastime which Blome, a writer of the seventeenth century, declares to be full of subtlety, and possessing divers delights and varieties which other chases do not afford), he was gladdened with the prospect of a grassy arena such as few portions of her Majesty's dominions can equal or surpass.

There is a general consensus of opinion among all masters of fox-hounds as to the absolute necessity—not to say expediency—of rattling the young foxhood of their territories about, if only to teach *them* the legitimate art of self-defence, besides the value of the early quiet practice to the young entry. In England cubbing is a regular institution, occupying a large portion of the quarter preceding the regular campaign, and the number of cubs immolated during this period seems to Irish ideas almost a wanton and excessive sacrifice. Certain it is that no county in Ireland could withstand the drain which the excessive keenness of many English huntsmen make in the fox supply for the season. The Marquis of Waterford is almost the single M.F.H. in Ireland who carries out the English programme in its entirety—buying cub-hunters specially for the purpose, and producing by November a list of

masks and faces which is far ahead of any of his brethren of the craft. But it must not be forgotten that the Curraghmore hounds have special advantages in the magnificent "chase" afforded by the home woods and pastures, and the bearing and discipline of this fine pack show in the season the benefit of these early lessons in woodland lore. Most Irish masters have to contend with an almost entire absence of forest privilege; for any traveller throughout the island must be impressed at once with the generally treeless and hedgerowless aspect of the landscape as he surveyed it from railway carriage or coach. "Cædunt arbores qui alteri sæculo prosint" was the motto of our forbears, in lieu of the "serit" of the poet, and square miles of unshaded greenery make one imagine that in some past generation a legion of arboricidal Gladstones had been suddenly let loose over the land, with orders to leave no sylvan or leafy thing standing. This want of woodland has, perhaps, something to say to the staider system of cub-hunting which obtains generally throughout Ireland—shorter in extent and inferior in result to the English practice. Thus, with the single exception of Mr. Mervyn Pratt's woods at Cabra, where the packs of two counties take their pleasure alternately, I know nothing at all comparable to the hunting facilities which the Lower Woods afford to the Badminton kennels—the Northampton forests to their packs. The burden from most counties has borne a most monotonous iteration—game abundant, but scent at zero. In Kildare, which is a very artificial country, the supply of foxes bodes well for the ensuing campaign. There have been a few sharp gallops, but want of scent has been the rule. Mr. Hamilton Stubber explored the Queen's County with the same happy results; while in Kilkenny foxes turn up whenever they are wanted, and the average has been something over one killed each morning. Lord Huntingdon and Mr. Trench find the Ormond and King's County territories well stocked, and so do the United Hunt, the Muskerry, the Duhallow, and the Limerick hunts. In Western Meath Mr. Montague Chapman has been very busy, and I heard

of a cub killed at Galston Park last week, who really showed fine sport. In Louth Mr. Filgate has had to fight the same uphill battle against low scent in covert till the 12th of this month, when things improved at Hilltown, and a brace of cubs were killed there, and another brace run to ground. In Lord Gormanstown, who died very recently full of years and honours, this county loses a very staunch supporter of fox-hunting in theory and practice; but in this family it may well be said—

"—— Uno avulso non deficit alter
Aureus."

Fox-hunting begins in Louth on the 24th inst. The obituary list of the past week has been swelled by the name of George Putland, who was a thorough patron of sport in all shapes—*terrâ marique potens.* In him the Bray draghounds lose their enterprising master, and the Brighton of Ireland misses a pioneer in all sporting adventure.

In royal Meath much of the cubbing is done in that remote and picturesque corner, where Cavan, Westmeath, and Longford have planted their marches, and Lough Shelin forms a reservoir for all these counties—a rough country enough, but admirably suited for the purpose, even if somewhat hard on horses. There was such a fine stock of foxes left last season in Meath, that, even supposing Lucina had not been propitious to the gravid vixens, no apprehension of blankness in any quarter need be entertained. The reason for choosing the hillier and wilder districts for making young hounds must be obvious to any one who has ever driven through this bovine country, where the bullocks are as those of Basan, and where unaided nature alone turns out horned stock in a condition to be envied by the most patient and expert of stall feeders in the Sister Isle. I know nothing more striking to an eye fond of pastoral scenery than a sudden transition from the more highly-cultivated but less blessed fields of England to the grassy pastures of midland Meath, what

time the partridges are being sorely exercised by drivers and gunners in ambush. There is a sappiness and a richness of colour in the lush green grass which no other land can rival, and every tree and thorn-bush acknowledges the fertility of soil and mildness of climate which makes almost every wide pasture field, with its well-bred, well-fed herd of ruminant cattle, a better study for a Cuyp or Claude than even the best bits of Normandy or Picardy. I have not heard that scent has been more propitious to Meath than to other parts of the Green Isle, which, for the first time this year in the memory of its old inhabitants, realized Virgil's description of a parched land unwatered by art or nature—

"Cum exustus ager morientibus æstuat arvis,"

or that any very striking passages occurred in their cub-hunting period; but the forthcoming season is spoken of as likely to be exceptionally brilliant, so far as large fields are concerned, and an influx of distinguished visitors. Royal names are even coupled with royal Meath's and kingly Kildare's hunting grounds; but, be that as it may, no descendant of the Stuarts can forget that a special and spontaneous loyalty awaits him in the hearts of Ireland's genuine sons and daughters.

On the 18th inst. the Ward Union Hunt were announced in a very influential oracle of Irish sporting matters, and with much flourish and circumstance, as about to begin their annual stag chases; and, in order to mislead still further, the point of rendezvous was fixed at the kennels of Ashbourne, where, at a solid and substantial *déjeûnèr à la fourchette*, the Ward Union committee usually meet their country friends and supporters, as well as the garrison of Dublin, and, it may be, the hunting section of the vice-regal staff, with that miscellaneous aggregation of men and women to whom the panorama of a stag hunt and the certainty of meeting many friends and acquaintances is quite attraction enough to draw them from a circumference of ten or fifteen

miles. The morning was glorious; the afternoon was almost continuously wet. So it did not add to one's equanimity to find at the usual trysting time, or it may be half an hour later, that one formed a unit in a small body of *poissons d'Avril*, who had been credulously drawn to Ashbourne's precincts by the same baits—flesh pots and sport. The printer, it seems—or his inspirer—had shoved on the hand of time by a week. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!* Hence these dripping garments! But if the fiat had not gone forth that "this day a stag must run" (or die), the kennels, stables, and deer park were well worth a passing glance, with everything about them as taut and ship-shape as in an old-time seventy-four; the kennels in their wholesome sweetness showing that "the nitrous air and purifying breeze" were important factors in Charlie Brindley's system, while the presiding genius of the place was looking as hale, hearty, and vigorous as if the classic bard of "The Chase" had drawn his ideal portrait from him—

> "The huntsman ever gay, robust, and bold,
> Defies the noxious vapours, and confides
> In this delightful exercise to raise
> His drooping head and cheer his heart with joy."

It is certainly provoking to ride a long distance for sport and see none; but, on the other hand, the ditches looked on either side of the road chokefull of grass, weeds, and other constituents of "blindness," and this Ward country is quite difficult enough to cross in midwinter without the presence of any extraneous impediments. No doubt the disappointment was salutary.

II.

"χθῶν σεσαλεύται."

"Tally-ho! Gone away!"

Lever du rideau in Meath—Kells—Headfort—Fast thing from Shaucarn—Bellinter and its beauties—Summerhill—Wilkinstown—Swainstown—Carton, etc.

MANY will be familiar with Charles Lamb's naïve rejoinder to the chief clerk or head of department at the India House, when he was summoned before that impersonation of ruffled official majesty. "Mr. Lamb, why *do* you come so habitually late to your office? I must have some explanation, sir." "'Tis true," stutteringly answered Elia, "'tis quite true that I *do* come *very* late, but pray recollect how *very* early I go away." Now the Meath hounds are the very antithesis to Charles Lamb's systematic curtailment of the hurry due to red tape and departmental ukase. They begin earlier than any pack I wot of in Ireland, and they leave off later. Their precision at the trysting place on the correct card during the season is often considered over-strained by the tardy and unpunctual, and so long as it is possible to draw on during the brief illumination of a winter's day, so long will Mr. Waller comply with any reasonable request to try so-and-so—run the hounds through that coppice or furze-brake—even where many a master would think he had done more than enough to gratify an ordinary appetite for sport in his field. In fact, the fox family in Meath have a very uneasy time of it, once the cubs have shown signs of

being able to travel afield; and the description one Irish landlord in London gave of another's retainers, namely, that Mr. Threestars' tenantry were the most harried and harassed set of men he knew of (meaning thereby their familiarity with distresses, processes, and evictions, and such like engines of the oppressor), is very apposite, I think, to foxhood in Meath. On the other hand, during the close season, these interesting felons have the tenderest care lavished on their wants and caprices. Bulletins are sent about respecting the health and habits of Mrs. Vixen and her thievish brood. They take "young lamb" before any of our sybarites; presents of game in fur and feather, black game in the shape of crows, woodpigeons, and many other minor delicacies of the season, find their way to the earth or hollow tree the family are known to haunt; forays on hen roosts, felonies of pheasants—all these things are not only condoned, but acquiesced in, as the ebullitions of a wild, high-couraged race; while some noble sportsmen have, I hear, with a view to improve their physique and to initiate them early into training, supplied the young esurients and their mammas and papas with Spratt's dog biscuits, by a due course of which food it may be supposed, theoretically, they would be put on a level with their pursuers so far as condition went, while their wily instincts would be so much weight in their favour in the great handicap 'twixt fox and hound. Whether the new style of feeding works the desired result is a problem awaiting solution; but I feel sure that if a turtle soup and still champagne regimen was a specific for turning the ordinary vulp into an extraordinary, straight-running, long-winded, bold tod, the remedy would not be long wanting in certain quarters. Fortunately, a rat, a newt, a frog, a beetle, or a mouse rank higher in the fox *ménu* than the veriest nectar or ambrosia of our cellars and larders.

The hunting of foxes in Meath ceased to be an Eleusinian mystery to which the hierophants and the initiated (practically the few who had "the office," as the argot goes) alone were admitted, on Thursday, the 19th inst. I believe I am correct in stating that,

in accordance with the time-honoured traditions of the country and its hunting archives (inflexible generally as were the laws of those old oriental hunters, the Medes and Persians), the previous Tuesday would have witnessed the *lever du rideau* on royal Meath's fox-hunting drama, but that many of the principal supporters of the hunt and owners of coverts were engaged in synodical functions in Dublin of the gravest moment—in fact, electing Lord Plunket Bishop of Meath (Ardbraccan, his palace, is close to the county kennels, and its wide episcopal lands and woods are much run through and over in the season). The scene of the opening day is, I believe, equally fixed by custom or tradition, or both, at Headfort, the spacious park of the marquis of the same title, which graces with its well-wooded undulations and natural lake (formed by the river Blackwater, now in full spate) part of the line of hills on which stands the interesting old town of Kells, whose history is so intimately interwoven with the fluctuations and vicissitudes of Ireland's fortunes. The antiquarian would fain wander by the Aryan round tower, or by St. Columkill's ivy-mantled hermitage—pausing at the Celtic cross, whose ornamentation and symbolism speak of a lettered and artistic past. The hunter of foxes must hurry past many interesting signs and tokens of a great past and comfortable present in Kells. In ten minutes more, if his Jarvey will give the mare her head, he will be within the cyclopean walls of Headfort Park, trying to find his mount in the tumult of horses and horsemen, and the *sauve qui peut*, devil take the hindmost, of the mimic fray; for a fox has been found in the home woods already, and a very large and brilliant *cortége*, strongly picked out with pink, is galloping up and down the rides, while Bishop and Colton are cracking their whips, and the sylvan sounds so long unfamiliar to the ear are filling space once more. A ring past the stately house, and then we emerge in a rather north-easterly direction towards open country, when, just as the many-coloured pack, racing over brilliantly green turf, were beginning to show us their form and pace so soon as scent (almost dead

in the woodlands) served them a bit, our fox got into an impregnable bank. A second fox had, it would appear, started parallel to him, and him we chivied, with no very positive result either, through the woods, and into some burrow or other near the railway; and now, during these pauses, we can take some stock of our *ensemble* and their surroundings.

Homer made, said, or sung a catalogue of the transports used in his famous war, but your scribe cannot undertake any enumeration of the sportsmen and sportswomen who flashed through the russet-tinted woods or lingered on the verdant lawns. Enough if we can glance at a few of the more conspicuous of the *melée*. The executive deserve the pride of place. Mr. Waller has evidently summered well, and so has his handsome workmanlike bay horse, whom I recognized as a friend of last year. Goodall, the new huntsman, is on a very neat grey of good lineage, but certainly to the eye not equal to his weight, save when horses can go *on top* of the ground, *not through* it. He looks the huntsman all over (as indeed he is bound to be, if birth and breeding avail aught), and his pack, full of lusty condition and bright as stars in a green firmament, look as if they had reached even a higher level than last year. Bishop, the first whip, was on a tidy-looking dappled grey; T. Colton, the new whip (from the Duke of Grafton and George Beers), was on a wiry bay—all good men and efficient, as we hear on all sides. Of the fair forms *en amazone*, Miss Waller was charmingly mounted on a well-known Kildare horse; so were Miss Tisdal and Miss Kellett, and the Misses Reynell. "Cadet," who carried Mrs. Garnett, is a celebrity beyond hunting fields; Lady Chapman's ponies were extremely neat. Big men must have big horses—big somewhere, though not necessarily leggy, or even tall. Mr. Sam Reynell was riding a stalwart bay of a good stamp; the Hon. Harry Bourke's Phenomenon looked capable of doing as great things as he did last year; the Hon. C. Bourke was on a capital flea-bitten grey; Mr. Mervyn Pratt rode a fine hunter; the Marquis of Headfort rode two of his high-class

hunters through the day; the Hon. Captain Maxwell was admirably mounted on a chestnut mare; Captain Trotter's bay looked as if it could carry a heavier man than its owner (a harder 'twere not easy to pick); Mr. Kearsley's grey was a very nice high-caste animal; Mr. Dyas was on a rare weight-carrying stamp, of a light bay colour; Mr. Naper, of Loughcrew, always rides nice horses; Mr. Johnstone's colt by The Colonel looked full of promise; while Messrs. Rothwell, Rowley, Mortemer, Hopkins, Ratcliffe, Sweetman, Walker, Montgomery, Chapman, Froome looked very happily carried; and Master Wilson Patten (the youngest entry, I fancy) looked at home on a neat black pony. Half an hour succeeded in doing hunter's justice to the good things which Lord Headfort's hospitality provided, and while in the dining room the topic of conversation was the hunting convocation to which Lord Waterford had bidden so many hunting celebrities, and the high-class sport he had shown them—notably two very good runs, the first from Lord Bessborough's coverts, and the second from the Castletown woods.

Presently we are by the side of a gorse which rejoices in the name of Williamstown (Mr. Stawell Garnett's care, I believe), and are gladdened by an almost instantaneous find and "gone away!" Popping over a low stone wall, we sweep past Dilmount, when again sport is marred in a most promising stage by defective earth-stopping. Trains in this part of the world wait only for "the captain," so we bade a reluctant farewell to the pack *en route* to Kingsfort, which, I believe, did not hold to-day. "O dura venatoribus terga" must be the motto of this Meath line, for an exchange from the saddle to a first-class carriage is hardly a gain in comfort or even *softness*. I hear this line is very liberal to hunters, and this fact, if true, must cover a multitude of imperfections and short-comings in charges and accommodation. A dripping day is succeeded by an evening downpour, and the lower country seems partially in flood, every brook having overflowed its banks. Thus far into the bowels of the earth (I mean

copy) had your scribe penetrated, when he received an account, written in hot haste and with none of the intoxication of delight yet evaporated, of the glorious *finale* of Meath's opening day—which, miserable slave and bondsman to a niggardly company that only runs two trains per diem, he was denied the joy of witnessing, even if his testimony had been only that of a witness placed by force of circumstances at a respectful distance. The daylight was just beginning to wane, when a fox posted out of Shancarn, made his point straight for the hill of Mullagh, nearly seven miles distant, where the hounds had to be whipped off, owing to the supervening darkness. Scent, I hear, was superb, pace something short of flying; and this express rate of travelling, plus a big brook, weeded out the field, barring four—Goodall, whose riding was simply "Goodallish" (pardon the expression, but the Correggiosity of Correggio tempted me), the Hon. Harry Bourke, and Messrs. Trotter and Kearsley. Of those *proximi longo intervallo* I can give no account, and I tell you the tale as 'twas told to me. From all I hear, Goodall has already won golden opinions in royal Meath. Friday introduced me to about the smartest pack of bitches, small foxhounds, about a dozen of the best-stamped weight carriers, nearly all greys, to be seen in Ireland, and such kennel and stable arrangements and appliances as an amateur of hounds and horses and all their paraphernalia rarely has an opportunity of witnessing. I allude to Mr. J. J. Preston's private pack of harriers, with which he hunts his "lordship" of Tara and the neighbourhood of his own beautiful park of Bellinter, on the Banks of the Boyne. The whole thing is so perfect of its kind, and so much good taste and judgment has been exercised in planning and completing every detail and minutia, that a description of the pack and its *entourage* would require at least a column to do it common justice. The kennels and hounds are under the presidency of John Suter, well known to many who do their pursuing of foxes in the Campagna, and to others in Herefordshire; while a

groom who can show such a stud of high-charactered high-class hunters—not the least partaking of the recognized cobby, short, strong, stuffy, quality-lacking harrier type—in the acme of autumnal condition, is to be much congratulated. Scent has not been very favourable to this pack so far, but they have killed a fair quota of hares already—well-nigh a score—and had a rattling burst with an outlying fox, whom they sent to ground, thus giving him a preliminary breather for his more regular antagonists, the Meath fox-hounds.

I should have added, for the information of sportsmen on your side of the Channel, that the squire of Bellinter was some few lustrums ago the proprietor of Brunette, perhaps the most successful steeplechase mare of this century; although several of the larger prizes and palms of cross-country contests did not fall to her share, I think she was his highest trump card in a very strong hand.

On Saturday Summerhill, visited by the Meath hounds, was the magnet to draw forth fox-hunters from downy pillows, late lounging breakfasts, and all other devices for killing the arch enemy, whom methinks 'twere wiser policy in us ephemeral mortals to propitiate by good service and sensible enjoyment of the short or long lease of lives he gives us. Summerhill, Lord Langford's fine park and mansion, is not only easily accessible to its own county, but it invites pilgrims from afar—say from West-meath and Dublin—by its comparative proximity to several stations, such as Maynooth, Leixlip, Kilcock, Enfield, and, on another line, Dunboyne, a place where many hunting men find it convenient to keep their horses for the season, the boxes and provender and the situation all inviting thereto.

It was my fortune to hack along the road from the latter town to the meeting point—some dozen miles, or near it, of English measurement—and to pass through a most peerless expanse of pasture land, where a bit of plough is as rare as a black swan out of Australia. To the left, at about two miles' distance, are

the woodlands of Carton, the Duke of Leinster's residence; then Colistown, point of departure of many a good fox, is passed, and so is the Hatchet, a very favourite meet of this pack. Then, once the chapel of Kilmore is passed, for miles the eye rests on hardly a single homestead, hamlet, or building of man in which a beaten fox would endeavour to baffle his bloodthirsty foes. Presently the park wall and trees of our destination come in view. Carriages flash past, and groups of horsemen, all bent towards the same goal, join us. The meet is at the Northern Lodge Gate, which opens upon a rather neat village, and by 11 a.m. it is clear that, in addition to the usual Meath field, there will be a considerable influx of visitors, for the *advenæ* are seen cantering down the avenue, past the house, and from their direction the majority of them may be guessed to hail from Kildare. In a few moments more the dog pack are busy in that extensive belt of plantation which shuts out the view of the park wall from the house of Summerhill, and before they find let us glance at the rather extensive lawn party. Among the non-Meath men are Lord Cloncurry, the Hon. Major Lawless, Mr. Percy La Touche, two Mr. Blackers, Mr. Sherrard, Captain and Mrs. Davis, Mr. F. Rynd, Mr. George Brook, Captain Frank Cole, with many others. Grey was decidedly *the* colour of the day — I mean only in horseflesh — for Snowstorm and Grey Plover have certainly taken rank among the highest hunting celebrities by their recent performances, not only in the hunting field, but in hunt and farmers' races. The roll-call of Meath would take too long to write at length; suffice it to say it embraced a small host of good men and good horses—the latter, young and old, made, half made, and some with their hunting troubles before them, like the young bears. Mr. Murphy was riding Sapling, a smart bay horse, who has shown a bit of galloping form already, while among the young ones a bay by Blood Royal — ridden by a welter pursuer, Mr. Rafferty — moved well, and looked like a promising hunter; while Captain

Tuthill seemed nicely mounted on a young chestnut of good stamp, and Mr. C. Hamilton was on a Carlo Maruni horse, who seemed a good performer indeed.

But the hounds are now in full chorus, and are rattling a fox merrily and musically through the woods, while we emerge at the eastern lodge gate, and presently somebody views a red rover racing away towards Pratt's Gorse—a charming line, and likely to lead to a good run. Is he the hunted one? We tarry for a few moments on the road in expectation, but not a hound forsakes the old quarry; so we get into the park again to find the pack have slipped away in a northerly direction, and after a ride of a few minutes we get a view of the country intervening between the park wall of Summerhill and a point short of Dangan Castle literally peopled by pursuers of all shades and colours, who are *not* with the hounds, and don't quite know where they have gone to. Some are incoherently slipping up lanes, some are perched on banks just about to leap down, others are quietly and patiently resigning themselves to their fate of being thrown out in good and numerous company. But a minute or two solved the problem. The hounds had checked by a clump of trees, and thence, after a cast or two, took on a cold line to the Bulling Gorse, part of which appeared to me cut down; thence over some stiffish fences, and a couple of large but safe doubles, in a sort of semicircle, back by the Bulling.

The next stage was a visit to Rahinstown gorse, when three foxes were on foot. Scent was not much better than in the earlier hours, and the six-mile point that a Rahinstown fox made recently was not to be repeated, as the driving power was wanting; so some ringing was all that ensued, and that not very fast or furious—Major E. Lawless showing us that neither his horses nor himself have lost their straight-going propensities, one drop which he negotiated being a perfect caution to unstrung nerves in men or defective shoulders or forelegs in horses.

Meanwhile Mr. Maxwell's harriers were discoursing most excel-

lent music in that pastoral district to the west of Dunboyne, to a very distinguished circle of admirers, among whom was his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, Captain Fitzgerald his equerry, and a cloud of light and heavy horsemen, attracted by the fine day, the inviting country, the certainty of finding plenty of furry game, and the prospect of a pleasant ride; nor were they disappointed. The first hare, found near the trysting place, "Sterling" (good name for man, horse, or hound), ran very straight and fast for some twenty odd minutes, and was rolled over in the Moor of Meath, to the great delight of Mr. Betagh—who, in Mr. Maxwell's absence, held the horn of office—Mr. Leonard Morrogh, of the Ward Union Hunt, Captain and Mr. Butler, of Priestown, and other notables in the hunting world, who know what a quick thing is with stag, fox, or hare. One used to hear a good deal of the qualifications for "the man for Galway," among which were a good trigger-finger, a quick eye, a firm seat and good hands and nerve on horseback. As Duke of Connaught, his Royal Highness is certainly by virtue of his title "the man for Galway"; but, titles apart, and rank apart, the Prince certainly proved himself, by universal consent, the man for the Dublin country. His straight bold riding was on every tongue. Some inaugural function in Dublin claimed his presence, and prevented the royal *cortége* from witnessing the remainder of the afternoon's sport, which was very good and satisfying. I forgot just now, in writing about Summerhill, to say that this park has already done good service to the Meath Hunt, and that among the best things of their cubbing season was a good run from here, and another from Mr. Fowler's covert of Rahinstown.

On Monday this pack met at Wilkinstown station, not many miles from the kennels. The day was bright and gaudy, with a touch of winter in it when the sun was not asserting his supremacy. Scent ranged fairly good, considering all things, or the hounds could never have given the satisfactory account they did of a very twisting, home-staying, dodging lot of foxes whom they

encountered to-day, who tried every device foxhood is capable of—running the fences and ditches, through sheepholes, over foiled ground, and so on; but the pack gave them no chance, following every turn and twist, working like harriers, and, by the most exemplary patience and perseverance, enabled Goodall to handle a brace of cubs and to run a third to ground. It was quite a hound day, and the lovers of hunting had a rare treat.

Tuesday among Meath men was a day of great expectations, which were only partially realized. In the first place, the congregating point, Swainstown, Kilmessan, is in the heart of a magnificent pastoral country. It is known to be fox-haunted to an almost embarrassing degree; and Kilcarty Gorse is nearly synonymous with, and implied in, the trysting place—equivalent to long odds on a good gallop. Add to all this that Rumour had busily propagated the report that his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught was about to pay his maiden visit to Meath's broad pastures, a report which the fathering wish no doubt assisted in spreading. Another fine and rather brilliant day; and it will be easily understood that a very numerous and fashionable assemblage was seen mustering on the lawn of the Kilmessan parsonage, and other pleasant rendezvous in the neighbourhood of Swainstown House, between 10.30 and 11 a.m. There are parsons and parsons! Some are monkish fanatics; others are engrossed by the detail and minutiæ, the black letter, the symbolism, the externals, be they pompous or lowly, of their caste. Too much unleavened learning exalts some above ordinary mortal fellowship; too little prompts others to rush in where angels fear to tread. But commend me to the parson who is not a whit the less a churchman or divine, or a shining light to his circle, because he can enter into, and enjoy in moderation, the amusements of his fellow-men—who may not hunt himself, though he knows all about it, but can greet with a hearty, kind welcome pursuers who come in his way. It seemed natural and *de règle* for most of the *habitués* of this hunt to turn

into Kilmessan Glebe. The hounds and staff knew their way there, and somehow most hunters naturally turned in at the lodge gate. The keen air made many who, like myself, had ridden more than half a score of miles to the meet, pretty hungry, and the esurient were not sent empty away. But *the* Duke (just now there is only one in Ireland) was *not* at breakfast, and it soon transpired that he was not to be seen in these latitudes to-day. So Kilmessan village, that had pranked itself out in extra bravery in honour of the occasion (the show of Galway red cloaks was worthy of the poppy fields of India), was forced to content itself with the *cortége* of the hunt, minus its own particular bright star of loyal expectation!

Swainstown, Mr. Preston's park, did not hold to-day as it did on the occasion of my last visit, so we trotted on to Kilcarty Gorse, and the find there was so quick that those who loitered to coffee-house, or exchange their hacks for hunters, had to gallop very fast to make up lee way. The fox broke handsomely in a north-westerly direction, giving the field a large, safe double for their initial fence. He then inclined to the right, running very fast over some large grass fields, till a short check let up the tail men. Then the line took us to a road by Cortestown (Mr. Wilkinson's neat residence), and from that point the hounds hunted him, with very catchy scent, for about a mile and a half, till we came to the Trim branch of the Meath line, which our fox probably ran, and here we left him, the Boyne not being far off. There was plenty of fencing in the line we had travelled, and lots of leisure to look at our neighbours and the performances, meritorious or otherwise, of their hunters. I saw a hard welter weight get a very *phenomenal* sort of fall at a big up-bank, the horse slipping up against one of the hounds, whom, however, he did not seriously injure. A projecting bough of a tree hurled another man, who was riding a very neat *ci-devant* chaser, out of his saddle. Old Ironmould—who, if I recollect right, once made Marie Stuart gallop her best at a finish—was jumping as if to the manner and

the country born; while a very neat thoroughbred grey, belonging, I think, to Mr. Turbitt, of Dublin (a winner too), was fencing in beautiful style. Mr. S. Garnett's Roscommon Grey, a new purchase, showed very well in the field to-day—a master of weight, with great jumping power; and so did a very hunting-like horse of the same colour ridden by Miss Coleridge, of which I heard a very high character. Mr. Brown was carried by a most masterful-looking chestnut. Mr. Dunn is always seemingly well-mounted, and the Hon. Captain Rowley's chestnut and Mr. Stewart's big brown mare were good samples of their classes. But we have now crossed the Meath line, and are in that beautifully green valley bisected by the metals, the gentle acclivities of which are crowned by Killeen and Dunsany Castles on one side, by Warrenstown and Batterjohn on the opposite. A straight point-to-point fox chase in such a wilderness of parks and demesnes is at this time of the year not to be calculated on, but *en revanche* there was a fine show of game, and from the road it was a perfect treat to view the many-coloured packs streaming over the pastures between the woodlands. One tod I saw killed; another run to ground. Of the sequel in the afternoon I cannot speak with confidence.

The Kildare hounds spent their fore and afternoon of this date in the Duke of Leinster's extensive woods at Carton, but without much sport or good result.

The Ward Union hounds really met to-day at Ashbourne. Of the feasting, carousing, hard riding, and sociality which a beautiful day and pleasant surroundings encouraged, I must speak in a future letter, having exceeded my limit.

P.S.—The opening meet of the Ward Union hounds on the 25th was a most unequivocal success, judged by any test you please—the size of the field, the vast gallery of critics and spectators, or the quality of the sport, of which I can only send you a *précis* just now, reserving details for another occasion. About 2.30 p.m., an untried red stag was enlarged in the lands of Beltrasna, not very

far from Ashbourne, and he was running in the direction of Kilbrick, when a colley dog headed him, and thus spoilt a very promising gallop; for the stag, mindful of the deer-park and his companions, turned back towards the place of his enlargement, and after giving us a sharp mile or more in view, was secured close by Fleenstown. A second red hind fared better than her predecessor, for she led her pursuers a rare dance by Kilrue, Balfestown, the Fairy House raceourse, towards Caulstoun, and so on into darkness and temporary liberty. There was tremendous grief, and two valuable hunters succumbed to the pace, distance, and recurring obstacles.

The opening scenes of fox-hunting in Louth were equally brilliant and successful.

III.

"Make me feel the wild pulsation I have often felt before,
When my horse went on before me, and my hack was at the door."

Opening day with "the Wards"—With the Louth hounds—The Flat House—West Meath, etc.

THOSE readers of *The Field* who followed "Triviator's" records of the fleeting chase in Ireland last season will recollect that the Ward Union opening meet was like that of the witches on the blasted heath—in thunder, lightning, and in rain. The two former may be poetic licenses; the latter was a most prosaic force, of such huge antagonistic power that it quite vetoed all chance of hunting in safety or comfort in these flooded tracts; so that a hunting council convened at Ashbourne (aye, even *credite posteri*, after much solid and fluid refreshment had been snugly concealed and stowed away about the persons of these same friends in council) decided that hunting the stag must be postponed that day. So we returned, well fed, indeed, and well cared for in every way, but minus the object of our visit to Ashbourne. For three subsequent days, if my memory serves me, did the Hyades, the Pleiades, and all the patrons and patronesses of the watery element who had ever been translated to the galaxy above by the pantheistic Ovid, fight in their courses against stag-hunting. A week ago, and it seemed odds on a recurrence of a similar rainy experience. The brimming rivers

were flooding their callow lands everywhere, and there appeared no pause or intermission of the downpour. Since Saturday, however, the weather has worn quite another aspect. *Sat prata biberunt* was the edict, and the refreshed pastures of Meath and Dublin never shone in a richer lustre of green; nature, in the perfect hush and lull which succeeded the fierce rain tempests, never wore a lovelier aspect. The air was balmy, and the poet's or poetaster's couplet,

> "If thou wouldst see green Erin aright,
> View it in autumn's mellow light;"

was never better realised by tourists and visitors to our many points of interest and natural beauty. The corn has been almost universally carried, the hay ricked long ago. The fine week came most opportunely for the potato harvest, as that critical and delicate tuber—for which no national substitute has ever been discovered—has shown some symptoms of premature decay already, and it is of vital importance that the many thousands of tons now being dug and pitted through the length and breadth of the land, should be put together as dry and safely as possible. *Sat prata biberunt!* Nationally and insularly, we may be very thankful for our harvest prospects and realities. The *panis* is tolerably safe and abundant; the *circenses* begin everywhere.

> "Uprise ye, then, my merry, merry men,
> This is our opening day."

Scant need is there to din the refrain into Dublin ears, as the opening of the kennel and deer-park doors at Ashbourne for the season is a very great function in that sporting metropolis, and politics and polemics are temporarily absorbed in its engrossing vortex. Coaches, civil and military, are converging towards the northern road, well freighted with hunting men and women. Led horses have preceded them by an hour, while on-lookers have had an opportunity of contrasting the neat, well-bred, well-fed, well-groomed, lumberless hunter of the century

with that gaudy equine monstrosity of the worst Flemish type which victorious William bestrides in "College Green," reminding me far more of a Roman imperator than of a hard-fighting Dutch prince.

"On horseback Nero mounted, crown'd with bays,"

occurs to me as I pass this curious caperer in mid air. The road to the kennels is as dreary, monotonous a stretch as even Northern Germany can produce (which is handicapping it uncommonly high), and the ten long Irish miles seem to partake somewhat of the German standard. Ashbourne itself—I speak it with all respect to its constituted authorities—is as "one-horse, tin-pot a city," to use the Yankee idiom, as need be desired; but the huntsman's establishment (Charles Brindley's), which combines more or less club-house, reception rooms, private residence, deer-park, kennels, and stables, is to the hunting eye the redeeming and interesting feature of the village. With many who entered long ago to stag—peradventure when soldiering in Ireland, or aiding the republic by their counsel and statecraft (by republic I mean the public weal, for we are monarchical of the monarchical here)—but whose lives are no longer cast in such pleasant hunting scenes as Dublin presents,

"Memory will stoop to trace
The parlour splendours of that festive place—
The whitewash'd wall, the neatly sanded floor,
The varnish'd clock that stood behind the door."

This is not exactly a photograph; but few, I ween, will forget the solid comforts and civilities they have met at Ashbourne and its well-ordered interior. To-day it was really *en fête*. A forenoon so still, warm, and beautiful, that a thunder shower seemed the only thing to fear, had tempted an enormous section of Dublin to make a day of it with the staghounds, and thither they flocked in hundreds, if not thousands, in cars, carriages, and a medley of wheels not unworthy of Epsom Downs; the

distance from either metropolis not being wholly dissimilar. Here is the "Sans Souci" drag, enormously loaded—a most workmanlike affair, and as effective as ornamental, for it is seemingly ubiquitous; three or four regimental coaches follow or lead it. Here are a train or two of polo carts drawn by miniature hunters; a capital tandem of well-broken horses follows; then a perfect procession of "side" cars, and a few buggies, gigs, carts, etc., among whom Mr. Allen, the well-known V.S., drives decidedly the smartest stepper in a very neat blue roan mare. The Garrison sends a small squadron, recruited chiefly from the Inniskillings and 3rd Dragoon Guards, the latter regiment still in mourning for that promising young officer, Lieutenant Lees, who was recently killed in the Phœnix Park by his horse falling over timber. Captain Kearney, Messrs. Trotter, Kearsley, etc., represent Meath well and truly in good mounts. Dublin has, of course, turned out in force, and the Ward Union men (proper) show a few very nice hunters in their division—none, however, better or truer shaped than a dark brown stalliony sort of hunter that carried Mr. Leonard Morrogh, for, I fancy, the first time this season. But the play is about to begin.

Let us leave the lively array of driving people, and turn up the winding lane. Now jump a small bank and ditch, and you will find yourself among wide grassy fields, a unit in a very large body of riders, for the most part very hard; but we cannot pause to survey them now. The watches tell us that the red stag (not a notorious public performer) has had his full law. Charlie Brindley and his son, gorgeous in new unstained pinks (as erst her Majesty's mail guards on May-day), are laying on the dappled pack, and their music, as the *bouquet de cerf* catches their spreading nostrils, tells us, with all the force of dog eloquence, that every second must now be utilised. The stag has treated the field kindly; for the first three or four impediments are small water jumps—nothing to the trained hunter, though even to them objections are made by sundry recalcitrant over-fresh or nervous steeds;

but one ditch, about the fourth or fifth, causes grief in the array, and a grey horse seems to require the aid of a crowd to extract him out of a gripe. A loose horse or two now prance about in much delight, as if they knew by instinct that men in tops and leather are but poor runners. The line seems to lead on towards Priestown and Kilbride. Presently, however, our stag turns sharp back (a colley dog has done this), and for about a mile or two is hunted in view over a beautiful bit of country, till at Fleenstown he is secured, more or less uninjured. The day was very trying to condition. I think the deer felt it, and so did all hounds and horses who were not in tiptop order, as the atmosphere was almost unseasonably warm and balmy, and of wind there was none. Flasks are now emptied. Those who can draw upon large studs get on second horses (one envies Captain O'Neal, who can send home Jonah, and mount another perhaps as perfect), and away pricks a much diminished procession to hunt a second deer while the day still vouchsafes an hour's more light. She proved equal to her reputation of last year, did this red hind, Lady Domville; for, enlarged by Killegland, with only a minute's start, she simply ran her foes out of time and out of light, and secured her liberty for the present at least. Mr. Trotter lost a valuable hunter in this run, and Mr. Allan M'Donough was equally unfortunate. The line by Caulstoun, the Fairy House, etc., was superb; the going very good.

It is the fashion to complain of the want of feathered game in Ireland, and the complaint has much truth in it, as those know full well who have toiled weary leagues and jumped ditches innumerable, and have not met ten head of such game all day long in their peregrinations, and these too wild to give the gunner a chance. Where there is real preservation game accumulates in Ireland; witness this fact, that in four days five guns shot 135 brace of partridges ten days ago at Creggs, in Galway, on grass farms for the most part, and not entering a single turnip field in their travels! Every foxhunter knows that the *magpie* is a certain

rencontre on his way to a meet, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in flocks. If superstitious, he may make auguries from their flight and numbers; but these birds are of comparatively recent introduction into Ireland, and the way they increase and multiply is marvellous. Superstition hedges them round with a sort of reverence; so, as a rule, they are not trapped or shot, or minished in any way, and they indulge their nice taste in game eggs to the utter ruin of the game supply of the island.

The Louth hounds press hard on their neighbours of Meath in their zeal and forwardness in the fox campaign, for they began their regular season on the 24th inst., at Castle Bellingham; and if the Latin proverb about a good beginning—or, in fact, a beginning at all—be apposite to hunting, these hounds have already grasped success for the year forthcoming. Just as they were drawing for their first fox, "the animal" emerged from a hedgerow with his head turned for Dromina, the pack on good terms with him; thence he made his way to Dromisken, turned to the right, and got to ground at Sea Bank, on the fringe of the Channel—a very sharp burst of twelve minutes. The next move was to Braggans-town, which, as usual, literally swarmed with foxes, and it was a piece of rare luck that there was no division, but that the pack unanimously settled to one, who rang back by Drumcashel, then made for Baron and Derrycarna to Corballis, where he crossed the river, gained Irishtown and Gadderstown Gorse, but, unable to stay there, made a supreme effort to reach Ardee House covert, in which effort he broke down, and was rolled over by the Red House Gate, after a chase of 1h. 15min., of which the greater part was capital for riders—all a most meritorious performance of the pack. Few opening chapters in hunting chronicles will contain a brighter record than this, from the Land's End to the last point of Caledonian hunting enterprise (and it does require enterprise to organise fox-hunting in such uninviting soil and surroundings). *Apropos* of the advantages that hunting men and hunting horses enjoy in Ireland, let me record the somewhat preg-

nant fact that in rather more than a week's hunting I can only recollect having crossed two minute plough patches—one cropped with potatoes, the other with turnips. Think of this, ye heavy pursuers who toil painfully through hock-deep plough—aye, in the heart of the Shires—till it requires the courage and resolution of a Murat or Osbaldeston to put your hunter at yon stiff post-and-rails, with six to four on a fall, scramble, or what the Yankees call a "declension," *Anglicè* a refusal. There is some difference between going on the top of the ground and through it. Horses know it, hunting men know it, valets know it; last, but not least, your cheque-book knows it, especially in the post-Christmas months.

On Friday the hunting programme for those living near the metropolis consisted of a meet with Mr. Maxwell's harriers at Queenstown, and for early risers the Meath hounds at Philpotstown. I can myself only testify to an exceptionally pleasant bye afternoon with Mr. George Brooke's 18in. and 19in. harriers, models of symmetry, who utterly astonished me by their capacity for driving at great pace, and their ability to compass the very large barriers which divide pasture farms anywhere near Dublin. Mr. Maxwell's harriers had, I hear, only a moderate fifteen minutes, which was rather a strong contrast to their last appearance in public; but the Meath hounds had so satisfactory and satisfying a day that the pack went back to kennel somewhere about two o'clock p.m.—the best evidence in the world that all the actors in the fox drama (the victims alone excepted) were thoroughly pleased with the performance. They met at Philpotstown, and, finding at once there, rattled their fox towards Rathmore for about thirty minutes, when he crawled into some outbuildings, and, as the pack do not crave blood, he was not persecuted to the death. The second draw was Meadstown, from whence they drove a fox handsomely into the open towards Philpotstown, and rolled him over in about half an hour—thirty-five minutes actually, if one must be accurate.

On Saturday the Ward Union meeting point was Kilrue, and his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, with a large party,

attended the trysting place. The day, warm and still, bordered on fogdom, and I have no doubt the same combinations of exhalations which made a haze here would have created a dense "London particular" on the banks of Father Thames. A trot of a mile or so brought the *cortége* to the wide grass lands of Ballyhack, where a very slight undulation gives an extensive view over the surrounding pastures. Here a red hind, known as Lady Langford—from, I think, the fine gallop she gave last year to that nobleman's park—was enlarged, when she went away tolerably straight, then inclined a bit to the left, and wended her way by Ratoath village, leaving Sutherland to the left, and with Garrison Hill for her beacon and landmark in front. Scent was anything but good, and though the hounds hunted steadily and well, they had no driving energy to-day; so Milady of Langford—whether headed or not on her track I cannot aver—presently retraced her course to Ratoath, passed by Mr. Corballis's house, and pointed towards the Fairy House, with its skeleton array of stands, which loomed very large in their emptiness. Whether a very long, dragging, unexciting chase—if chase it can be fairly called—ended in a capture or not, I cannot say, seeing I joined the homeward-bound fleet. There was a great deal of big jumping, and one or two "main drains," almost wide enough for a steam launch, were crossed by a select few. The Duke of Connaught seemed to revel in big jumping, and was admirably carried by his dark brown hunter, who, if not already named, might be appropriately called "Chancellor," as this son of The Lawyer has already attained the highest eminence among the sons of law and lawyers.

On Monday the Ward Union Hunt rendezvoused at the Flat House, not very far from Dunboyne, and, consequently, about a dozen of English miles from Dublin. The Flat House is not so called because it crowns a hilly country, on the *lucus a non* principle; its nomenclature is perfectly apposite to the locality, which is a sort of pasture field, only—unfortunately for

many—a pasture field with a large number of natural and artificial subdivisions, in which it is quite possible for man and horse to lie perdu for ever so long, unless the rescuer be at hand. The very levelness of the country involves several feet of extra depth in the ditches to carry off the superficial water, not to speak of the necessary strength and size of fences in all countries depastured by bullocks. The meet was not a large one by any means, or comparable to Saturday's; but a glance at men and horses told at once that riding was the ruling motive of the day and hour, not coffee-housing, pic-nicking, or the various causes and impulses which swell a meet of fox-hounds in a favourite neighbourhood. Several of the horses had performed in public; several would probably do so again next spring and summer; while the field contained not a few gentlemen jocks whose names are not unfamiliar in chasing circles here and on the far side of the Channel.

A mile or two brought us to the starting point, and in the first field it was quite evident, whatever be the proper term for the *odora vis* of deer, that rose—call it by any name you please—was shedding a perfume most enjoyable and titillating to the nostrils of the big dog pack, who travelled along most merrily and musically. The first two or three fences were nice open rhenes, which, however, let in a quota of the field. At first the line seemed to incline to the left of Porterstown; but those who, like myself and a few more, rode wide here, were presently wholly out of it, as the deer's course was under the old Fairy House Cottage, and thence round towards Ratoath, where pursuit ended in capture. A fresh deer was enlarged about a couple of hundred yards to the left of the Fairy House Grand Stand, with the brook of the same name immediately in front. It struck me that the quarry had been handicapped rather rigidly as to time; at any rate, for a couple of miles the pace was most enlivening—and the fencing, though very sound and fair for a horse that threw his heart over well to

the far side, was certainly of wider proportions than one often meets in any hunting country. Grief did abound, certainly, though I do not think there was a single bad accident; but the line leads us on through Harborstown, across a bye-road, into which there was some grief, and so on across the metals towards Baytown Park, where I must leave them still running. A red coat and a grey jacket got a strong lead after jumping the first fence; and, as their hunters crossed the large obstacles in their path without pause, dwell, or turn, they were not likely to be deprived of their pride of place, and certainly were not so far as my vision carried me.

To return to Meath and its hunting annals. I must hark back to an unnoticed but very good day last Thursday, when Drewstown supplied them with a capital straight-going fox, who ran by Kilskyre, then, heading for the right, made Clonabraney—Mr. Wade's fine park—where, owing to the severe illness of the owner, the hounds were stopped. The second fox emerged from Sylvan Park, ran by Balrath, and was killed in a pond near the town of Kells, after some beautiful hunting.

Friday, the 27th, I have already alluded to; but I have not recorded that the grief was in proportion to the brilliancy of the sport, for which a river and a huge double on the way to Meadstown are mainly responsible, as I am informed. Goodall, Mr. Trotter, and an English visitor, Mr. Stratford, were first in the run all through, I hear, the latter riding Mr. Montgomery's well-known chestnut.

On Saturday they met at Crossdrum, and had a very enjoyable thirty-two minutes from Beltrasna, killing in the open between Armagh and Sallymount. From the bog covert of the latter place they had a long hunting run of one hour and forty minutes to ground.

Louth continues as it began. On the 26th Mr. Filgate was at Townley Hall, and killed an old dog fox there after an hour's woodland hunting. He then rattled the foxes at Mellifont and

Macey's Glen, marking one of the latter to ground. On the 28th they were at the Mills of Louth; found at Drumgowra Gorse, rattled their fox over Tully, Feraghs, and the river, on through Knockhably, where they killed, after a capital seventeen minutes. Another was then marked to ground, and, after one hour and fifty-five minutes, a very ringing fox from Knockhably Gorse was broken up.

The meeting of the Kildare hounds at Johnstown Inn—for the first time this season—on Tuesday, the 31st ult., was a very fine piece of hunting pageantry; and, taking numbers, scenery, and accessories into account, it is probably almost unrivalled in the three kingdoms—certainly nothing in Ireland can approach it. The day was lovely in the extreme, though hardly suggestive of strong scent. The loyal hope of meeting his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, who is on a visit to the Duke of Leinster at Carton just now, no doubt added a certain proportion of fair faces in fair frames to the *cortége;* but this attraction apart, given a moderately inviting forenoon, you may bet six to four any day on an immense gathering in the High-street of Johnstown on the opening festa of Kildare foxhunting. Drives and rides through miles of park, glimpses of the hunted fox every now and then, a little jumping in and out of roads—what conditions could be more perfect for the enormous gallery of on-lookers? Kerdiffstown and Palmerstown appeared full of foxes; from Bishopscourt Stick Covert some three at least were expelled. The former were well rattled through their familiar fields and plantations; of the latter, one was forced out of his native haunts into the neighbouring woods of Palmerstown, but an accident prevented my learning his fate. I forgot to chronicle a nice cubbing run which this pack had ten days ago from the Hill of Allen Gorse to the Curragh. The Newbridge harriers found an outlier the same afternoon, and had a wonderfully straight gallop with him.

P.S.—The 31st of October—a day to be much remembered

by Irish foxhood—was also the opening day in Western Meath, when game proved abundant, and the woods round Lake Belvidere echoed hound music for hours. In Meath the day was memorable for a hunting run from Walsh's Gorse, which nearly gave Goodall his quietus—wire and blindness are our natural and unnatural enemies at this season; and a second pursuit of an hour and a quarter from Slater's Gorse, of which the first thirty-five minutes could hardly be surpassed for pace. In Lismullen (Sir J. Dillon's park) some five foxes turned up, but the conclusion was unequal to its first impetus. The Ward Union hounds hunted a brace of deer near the Black Bull on the 1st, but neither proved very good.

IV.

"The cry is—Still they come!"

Kildare's opening day—Pageant at Johnstown inn and village—Allenstown—Lord Darnley—Scariff Bridge—Cork and Lord Fermoy—Galway and Mr. Barton Persse—Maynooth—Mr. H. Stubber and Colonel Chaplin.

"*Suoni la Tromba intrepido!*" No longer let the merry hunter's horn far over the wooded hills be borne; let his clarion now peal forth through broad woodland, over dale and vale, coppice and gorse, for the revolving months have brought us to the threshold of November's calends. The sun, say the astronomers, is about to enter the sign of Sagittarius, and we are about to enter on the war path and don the war paint once more. What says the poet?

"Integer vitæ, scelerisque purus,
Non eget Mauri jaculis neque arcu,
Nec venenatis gravidâ sagittis,
Fusce, pharetrâ;"

which, freely translated, may run somehow thus:

"The man of pure and blameless life,
He need not arm, like Moor, for strife,
Nor seek the darts with poison rife."

Thank Heaven, we *may* leave battles to the Turkish hordes, and shed the blood of Scio's vine (preferring, of course, Bordeaux, save in poetry), grateful indeed that our battles are but the mimic forays of our chivalry on the invaders of our hen roosts—that our

great games are but war's image: a preparation 'tis true, if we are to harken to Pliny, for fiercer contests, if such be our fate; for, says that wise ancient, those who were designed for great captains were first taught to contest with the swiftest wild beasts in speed, with the boldest in strength, with the most cunning in craft and subtlety. "*Cedant arma togæ.*" Let partridge and grouse pack in peace; let pheasant rustle and challenge in woods and hedgerows unharmed; be motley now our only wear. Let us fall back on pristine custom and costume in casing our lower and middle man in the skins of wild beasts. But let them be well tanned and white as the driven snow, and let our livery be the national red; for the analogy of war's image must be complete, the properties *en règle.* And here I am reminded of a happy repartee made to the late Viceroy of India, the Earl of Mayo, by one of his tenants or tenants' sons, who, in the fanaticism of hunting enthusiasm, had walked or trotted over from a distant part of Meath to see the opening meet of the Kildare hounds, when his lordship presided over their destinies, and the kennels were at Palmerstown. "Why, Mick," said his lordship, when he had learned that the sight of the hounds was the sole motive for a journey of nearly fifty English miles, "you must be mad." "Ah! well, well, me lord; shure, if we were all out-and-out *sane,* there'd be little fox-hunting going!" How witty! How wise! How epigrammatic! But, laying aside generalities and *ana,* however apposite, we may now remark, in the terse language of Mr. Pigg, "that the tambourine is a rowling" all over Ireland—that the campaign has been opened everywhere. Let us hope that foxes have, for their own sakes, been duly harried; that masters have explored their wide demesnes, and, like the youth in Comus,

> "Know each lane and every alley green,
> Dingle and bushy dell of this wild wood,
> And every bosky bourne from side to side,"

in every part of their dominions; that the same cordial kindliness cements all classes concerned in the fox drama, as it has been

wont in this our beautiful island; and that fox-hunting may be regarded as a great national institution, instead of a vexatious "*corvée*" imposed by one set of men on another.

In Ireland—though very dramatic in action, thought, and speech—we are not generally theatrically mad, like our friends in France, when a premier representation must be seen *coute qui coute*. We reserve such fervour for the opening scenes of the fox drama. Witness Johnstown inn and Johnstown village on the 31st of October! I suppose the *levée* of a popular viceroy in Ireland and the Castle pageant is the finest parade of Ireland's *aristoi* in Church and State to be witnessed; but what is that to the *levée* and drawing-room combined in the ante-chamber, so to speak, of Monsieur Renard? What can upholstery do to rival the polychrome setting of the glorious woods, with the blending tints of ruddy beech, red gold chestnut, yellow larch, and sycamore, contrasted by the varying greens of ivy, holly, yew, and sombre-hued pines, and the cold shimmer of aspen and willow, all lit up into splendour by an unclouded sun? From 10.30 carriages of all sorts and shapes were pouring into the village from Naas on one side and Dublin on the other. These were the main portals, but there were side entrances likewise. By eleven o'clock the main street was so full that the then arriving coachmen had to content themselves with outside gallery places. All space near the cynosure—the hounds and staff—was taken up; indeed, it was no easy thing for a horseman on the quietest and handiest of hacks to thread his way through the densely packed array and exchange greetings in the market place with old friends and companions, drawn together, it may be, from the four corners of the world "known to moderns" by the magic and magnetism of fox-hunting. *Place aux dames*, and *les grande dames* of course. The Marchioness of Drogheda never misses an opening meet of these hounds, save for grave reasons, neither does the Hon. Mrs. Forbes. Here are the Lady Annettee La Touche and party, the Ladies Fitzgerald, and the Hon. Mrs. Barton on the most charming of

grey chargers, Mrs. Moore, of Killashee, Mrs. Adare, Mrs. Langrishe, Mrs. Kennedy, Miss Kilbee, Miss O'Hanlon, on a beautiful chestnut mare, and hosts more.

The Upper House was well represented by Lords Cloncurry, Drogheda, Clanmorris, &c.; the staff by General Seymour and Captain Lee; the household by Colonel Forster on Greek Fire. The 7th Dragoon Guards sent a coach-load under charge of Major Wheble, and there are some very smart-looking hunters in the regiment, evidently. The Inniskillings were in strong force; so I am sure would have been the 3rd Dragoon Guards, but that some grave military necessity interfered (I hope no sinister veering of the war vane). Horse Artillery from Newbridge, led by Mr. Knox, on a chaser of course, and with a new sort of leather saddle cloth or nummer—his own invention, I think, which contained such necessary appliances as a spare shoe, &c., very neat and workmanlike. The 4th sent Colonel Bray and some Arabs, of which I should like to have Captain R. Upton's opinion. The 75th sent Captain Beresford and others. Of the Ashantee campaign we are reminded by the Hon. Major Wood and the Hon. Captain Scott. Sir James Power, Bart., brought a drag-load from Dublin, and so, I think, did Mr. O'Reilly. The Ward Union men were very strongly represented, with Mr. Leonard Morrogh, as usual, beautifully mounted. In fact, I believe there were actually seven coaches all loaded, at the meet. The larger country houses near the scene, such as Straffan and Killashee, had evidently tested their power of expansion to the utmost limits. Roseboro, the Hon. Charles Bourke's bijou hunting box near the village, was bright with scarlet riders (if not runners). Masters and ex-masters jostled against each other in the crowd, which, if mainly insular, was composed of elements from all parts of the island. Verily, if Mr. Edmund Mansfield had been taking a theatrical benefit, he could not have craved a more bumper-like house. The exchequer must have made huge progress to-day (nearly 300 half-crowns were paid in); and, if

Kildare and her fixtures grow so deeply into the popular heart, I shall not be surprised to see a party of Cook's excursionists sent over under that gallant commander and Coryphœus to "do" Ireland in ten days, including a fox hunt in Kildare with property horses chartered from a circus (cobbler's wax and courage, be it Dutch or native, to be found by the excursionist himself).

But while we are taking a rapid survey of the *dramatis personæ;* while we are rejoicing in seeing such veteran sportsmen as Mr. Horace Rochfort, Captain Wakefield, Sir James Higginson, and others on their favourite hunters in their favourite hunting grounds, we cannot shut our eyes to the gaps that the mighty hunter Time has made in our wonted array. The Squire of Castletown, whose cheery cordial manner ever won the hearts of his associates, whether as master or acting master of the Christchurch Drag, in the Senate, in the tumult of a beaten and demoralised army (Lee's), or at the covert side near home, has gone from us to return no more. Mr. A. Love, whose broad back made so capital a beacon for men less well mounted or less capable, is unable to ride this season, owing to severe illness. Mr. W. Lynch, who was oftener seen in western and eastern Meath than in Kildare, died recently, to the grief of all good sportsmen. The strong Indian current tempts others away; among them Lord Kilmaine, so often seen in the van of Kildare pursuit. I forget whether it is the centripetal or centrifugal force which draws inwards (my scientific education having been neglected, and "Joyce's Dialogues" not being within reach); but if one force sent away some wonted sportsmen to more ambitious hunting fields, another proved even stronger in drawing men to the programme which Kildare and her caterers had provided for the day and the season. Sir Erasmus Borrowes, who has been an absentee for some time, was at the tryst, mounted on a fine lengthy bay horse, that, if my memory deceives me not, is a half brother of Caramel, who was bred within a field or two of the day's draw. Captain St. Leger Moore, forsaking his wonted pastimes of tent-pegging, lemon slicing, and all those Indian feats of horse-

manship for which his regiment is so celebrated, has returned for a season in Kildare, though few would have appeared after such a shaking and marking fall as he sustained yesterday: His brother, Mr. Stephen Moore, is also in the field; but time and space would fail me, were I to attempt anything like a catalogue *raisonné* of even half the sportsmen and sportswomen out, and will only add two names, as they represent men well known in wider circles than Kildare—Mr. Allan M'Donough, who was among the most successful gentleman riders of his day, and Mr. Thomas Beasley, who certainly enjoys that distinction at present, so far as Irish courses are concerned. But the vast aggregation has been stirred into motion by the *mot d'ordre* passed on to Will Freeman and his acolytes. History is repeating itself, and we are cantering over the turf of Kerdiffstown Park, while innumerable wheels are grinding the front of the avenue. Presently, the house passed, we are drawn up in a sort of space in a large grass pasture, separated from the good gorse to our left front by only a few hundred yards. As usual, there are some false starts. At last the "gone away!" is a reality; the fox has started in the direction of Tipper, and in five minutes we are confronted by a very large bank and brook, too large for ordinary men and ordinary hunters. The hard riders pause. "Tommy, make room for your uncle," would perhaps have been heard if the scene were nearer Cockneydom; and I'm quite sure the adjured would have accommodated their relatives. At last a weaker spot—two weaker spots, appear; fifty pairs of hind shoes are in the air nearly simultaneously. A Ward Union man was, I think, the first over; and soon after him was a well-known welter weight on a grey, whose good judgment was often invoked in selecting hunters for the Empress of Austria; in a field or two a loose horse was no novelty; but just as things were getting a bit animating our fox turned sharp back to Kerdiffstown, treated us to one final very large jump off a bank *into* water (for it was too broad to cover), and then succeeded a couple of hours of covert hunting through Kerdiffstown and Palmerstown Parks, varying

with the scenting power of the day—never very high. This over, we trotted on through Kill village to Bishopscourt, where the Earl of Clonmell—an absentee to-day—has made a new stick covert to do duty till his gorse, recently cut down, attains its full growth. The field, posted at very respectful distance from the drawing party, presently see two young foxes racing away through the park, their heads pointed for Oughterard Hill; while others have seen an old fox stealing off towards Johnstown Kennedy. The hounds were put on to the young ones, and, after some driving round the skirting plantations, one was forced out towards Baron Rath, raced across the wide galloping fields which separate Bishopscourt from Palmerstown, and, after some time, immolated, for the huntsman must have a mask, pads, and brush on his opening day; and with this closes the history of the *acta* of the Kildare hounds on the 31st of October; memorable, not for any very high-class sport, but for the largest and most brilliant meet which has perhaps ever been seen in Ireland—a good augury for the coming season.

Turning to Meath and its pack, last Thursday witnessed a much smaller assemblage and array opposite the substantial old mansion of Allenstown, the residence of Mr. N. Waller, the popular master of these hounds—whence many generations of Wallers have gone forth to do good service to Queen and country, in Church and State, and where hounds and horses have always filled stables and kennels, be the quarry of the time and fashion hare, stag, or fox. There is quite a sea of verdure all round, for the grass land is of Meath's richest quality (letting for £6 an acre); and old trees, well furnished and of goodly girth and proportions, tell their tale of long, peaceful, and undisturbed proprietorship. The early risers had seen the whole landscape white with rime, but by 11 a.m. of the clock all signs of Jack Frost's handiwork had vanished. A warm sun had done his spiriting quickly and well; the air was still and calm, and if the accepted theories about scent did not bespeak us very lively pursuit, the day in itself was enjoyable in the extreme,

everything looking its very best; and, if the year was evidently dying, it was fading in extreme beauty, with all the iris hues of the dying dolphin reflected around. Time forbids an enumeration of the rank, fashion, and beauty whom the day's loveliness and the pleasantly inviting scenery had drawn from even distant homes, but among the ladies in front of the hall door were Lady Headfort and the Ladies Taylor, Mrs. Garnet and Miss Howard, Miss Waller, Miss Tisdale, Mrs. Mortimer, Mrs. Dunville and party; while among the men were Mr. Ratcliffe, the oldest member of the hunt (his age is patriarchal, his appearance the reverse), and Master Wilson-Patten, probably the youngest follower of the pack. Captain Roden was here too, from whom, I believe, Lord Wolverton purchased his famous musicians.

After trying some woods near the house in vain, we moved to the hill of Faughan, a grassy knoll, whose wooded top is bisected by a very wide grassy ride. It is a hill only, or rather a hillock, but as the one-eyed man is great and king-like among the blind, so this hill surveys no less than thirteen counties, so level and low-lying are the surrounding grassy plains. I tell the tale as 'twas told to me, for a kind of haze prevented anything like an extensive view to-day. A gorse covert lies at its base, and from it a fox emerged at once. For some distance the bitches could hardly own their quarry, though he was close before them, but presently came a crash of melody, and then, heads up, sterns down, they raced down the acclivity, and fairly drove him past Allenstown House, by the Laurel Woods, on past Charlesfort Park (here the hounds divided for a short time on a fresh fox) to Moyagher, when he turned back through Charlesfort, made some loops and rings between this place and the Kells Railway, scent being very low at times. He was then taken past Faughan Hill to Martry, and in the very act of jumping out of an old cemetery there, he was pulled down in the surrounding ditch, after a pursuit of 2hrs. 1min., of which

the first part was at express pace. We next visited an osier bed by the banks of the Blackwater (Mr. Barnewell's covert, I believe), and from the parallel road we saw the pack run their fox for about a mile, and turn him up handsomely near Bloomsbury.

Rathmore was the *bonne bouche* of the day, much longed for by the hard-riding division, who, headed by Captain Trotter on a wonderfully clever grey from Limerick, had been showing us to demonstration that a right line is the shortest way of connecting two points, no matter whether timber, rhene, or frowning bank intervene, and thither we trotted off incontinent, as the day and light were already on the wane. It is a very strong gorse, surrounded by plantations and flanked by a ruined tower and a ruined church of much architectural beauty, which are both full of interesting memorials and traditions of the Cruise and Plunket family, once lords of the soil. For the last two centuries or more the broad lands round the big Rath have been owned by the Earls of Darnley, whose present representative has done as much for fox-hunting in Meath as any single proprietor throughout its wide extent. A quick find resulted from the throwing of the pack in, three or four foxes on foot, and some trouble in making one break bounds. At last he leaves his stronghold, head set for Allenstown; but, frightened by road people near the village chapel, he hies back to the gorse, and is again extruded. Again we are galloping towards Allenstown merrily (some three or four miles distant) when a flock of sheep spoilt scent, and though the line was recovered it was too late to hunt.

Copious rain fell during the night, and was falling fast as we drove westwards to Scariff Bridge, the fixture for these hounds on the following day, and some ten or twelve miles distant from yesterday's theatre of events. Scariff Bridge is near nothing particular, being an old-fashioned bridge over the river Boyne. The country round is flat, poor, and uninteresting, the fences look like many falls, and on several sides are bits of that *bête*

noir of Irish hunting—bog. A large field was not expected, but, the downpour notwithstanding, there was a very fair muster of hunting men and one solitary hunting woman to the fore. The array included the lord of the manor, Lord Darnley, mounted on a clever-looking, capable, bay horse; the master, Mr. Waller, Colonel Fraser, V.C., Lord Langford, and the Hon. Captain Rowley, both on very high-class hunters, a grey and brown; the Earl of Howth, on a lengthy son of Eidolon, and grandson of the Flying Dutchman; Mr. Sam Reynell, Messrs. Trotter, Kearsley, Kearney, Montgomery, Dunville, Cuppage, Purdon, Handley, Alley, etc. Much Wood, which for two miles or so slopes down to the Boyne, was our first try. It held a fox, whom we bustled about, but could do nothing with. The next, after trotting through a village called Ballivor, was a wild gorse heath flanked by bog, which, I heard, was called Corney Cavan, or some such name, and which an old native seemed much astonished at my never having seen before, as if the climax of life was to see this fox haunt (see Naples and die!). It held not to-day; but, after jumping a big bog drain, which furnished "stain" for a saddle or two, we found a real good fox in one of the Elm Grove plantations, who ran by the edge of the gorse proper without a moment's dwell, broke through some plantations, and, after taking us over some rather swampy lands not without checks, he led us by the Earl's Mills into Much Wood, where, having sixteen or seventeen miles to ride home, I left him. I hear Mr. Brown, the owner of Elm Grove, is one of the staunchest preservers of foxes in his district, and that he has given the hunt a covert or two. His hospitality to hungry hunting men has become proverbial, and such "proverbial philosophy" in a hunting country finds more votaries than Tupper's.

Meanwhile, the United Hunt in Cork have not been idle. Their opening day was on the 30th of October, and a brilliantly-mounted assembly did it honour, including Lord Fermoy, on his well-known hunter Balyroberts. Dundellerick was the meeting-

place, and a fox was unfortunately chopped in covert here. Bolton's, the next draw, furnished a number of foxes, of which one was killed after a very enjoyable ring of four miles or so. Harry Saunders, the new huntsman (*vice* Mason), seems liked generally, and altogether the horizon of hunting here is flushed with the rosiest tints. Rumour some time ago assigned the future mastership of this fine pack to a popular heavy-weight, whose lines are cast in a northern province, but I don't know if there were any foundation for the *on dit*.

Was it not Byron who talked about the feebleness of words to express the might, the majesty of loveliness? If he found it hard, how impossible to the *polloi!* Those who would see a hunting field in its might and majesty, *faithfully* limned, let them look at Osborne's picture of the Ward Union Hunt. I never saw anything more life-like than many of the figures which it contains, more perfection of truth in the various attitudes. Some may think that one or two of the leading men should have been more *en evidence;* but that is entirely a matter of taste and arrangement, and perhaps not wholly within the painter's province. As a work of art, and a faithful study of a popular subject, the picture will be sure to please generally.

The Galway hounds met on the 31st ult., at Monivea Castle, which is the usual scene for the opening day, partly, I fancy, out of compliment to Mr. R. French, its proprietor, who has ever been one of the staunchest of Mr. Burton Persse's supporters in good times as in evil days, and partly because the picturesque old mansion, with its fine surrounding woodlands, always full of foxes, is a pleasant and fairly central rendezvous for the large field generally assembled at such an important crisis in the Galway annuary. Much rattling of these woods was followed by a capital thirty-eight minutes, with only two checks, as my informant told me. The hounds were reported to me as in the most blooming condition; and indeed it would be a phenomenon to find them otherwise, as they are kennelled at

Moyode Castle, and under Mr. Persse's eye of unceasing vigilance.

Returning to Kildare and its pack. On Thursday they had rather an uneventful day, though the show of foxes was decidedly good. One they sent to ground from Sheriffs' Hill, after a short half circle, and another from Tinoran Hill gave them a circuitous chase, of which ten minutes only were good.

On Saturday, the 4th inst., they met in the historic town of Maynooth, whose secular and ecclesiastical story finds abundant testimony and confirmation in the ivy-mantled ruins, which, preserved with reverend care, link past and present better than do most villages of the same kind in Ireland. Time and space warn us to turn a deaf ear to the sermons in stones, which the grand old Geraldine keep would inspire. The meet was a very large one, for the railway authorities had issued a special train for the occasion, and half Dublin garrison—its hunting half, at least—was in the field to-day, the Inniskillings, I think, preponderating. His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught was a guest of his grace of Leinster, at Carton; so it seemed to have been a foregone conclusion that he would attend the meet, and so indeed he did. Ponder this fact, Whalley, Newdegate, and Co., to whom Maynooth is as the irritating red cloth of the "chulos" to the bull of Andalusia. This fact, and a gloriously warm day, swelled the congregation to almost abnormal limits; Dublin, Meath, and Kildare sending their beauty and chivalry to the assembly. A beautiful sight it was as the cavalcade wound its way along the new avenue towards Carton, the bright sun lighting up the mass of vividly red coats (every second pink seemed brand new), and adding new lustre to Propert's and Hoby's handiwork. Lord Maurice Fitzgerald and his sisters represented their ducal house; the Marquis and Marchioness of Ormonde had come from their proud castle on the banks of the Nore; Lady Powerscourt had come from her Wicklow home with Lady Chesham and the Hon. Miss Cavendish; the

Hon. Mrs. Barton's most perfect grey charger was there, and so were Mrs. Davis's black hunter and Mrs. Adare's bay cob, that I saw performing admirably over a large country by-and-by.

But the big pack are working through Moygaddy Wood, when a young hound or two makes a stampede to a false start. Cullen's gorse is next visited. Here the find was instantaneous, the fox slipping off just as the hounds entered his territory. Ardrass seems his point, but no doubt the thronged roads before him made him very careful and dubious about his route. The second fence is a nasty thick fir tree, stuck high in a gap and surrounded by bushes. Over this Lord Langford shows us the way on his Solon horse; but few follow his example, preferring a fence lower down. After crossing a bye road, the line led on towards Castletown, but the fox had been headed, I fancy, several times and forced to twist about, so we left him, after some casting around. I heard he succeeded in making Killadoon stronghold. Lara and Taghadoe, next visited, held nothing, so on we trotted to Courtown, where Captain and Mrs. Davis were dispensing hospitalities to a large number, while a few, sticking to the pack rather than the flesh-pots, saw them find a fox in the woods opposite the house, and, after some bustling, force him across a road into a fine area of grass land in the direction of Straffan. A large section of the field were on the road, so their start was admirable. Those who had to find their way through the skirting plantation and over a brace of fences lost some minutes, and theirs was consequently a stern chase and a very fast gallop. Here we tail men find ourselves in a field or two charging a wide and very blind ditch; a herd of bullocks takes possession of *the* spot; a heavy welter chooses a less desirable spot higher up, and comes down, so does a follower. But the chase is speeding onwards very fast—grass to gallop over and big fences to gallop across or fall into; a big canal-like drain partially interrupts this pleasant progress, and as we near the little wood of Taghadoe, scent begins to chill manifestly. His Royal High-

ness was admirably carried, and so was his equerry, Captain Fitzgerald, in spite of a fall. Their brother rifleman, too, Lord Clanmorris, was charmingly carried for a while on a son of Thomastown, a half or whole brother of Abdallah's. The fox was finally marked to ground at Taghadoe, when, I think, most pursuers turned homewards.

On the same warm, still, beautiful Saturday, scent was most propitious to the Bellinter harriers, who turned up a brace of hares in the open, after a couple of most animated pursuits—thirty and thirty-five minutes respectively. The Ward Union hounds, too, had a very fast thing from the enlarging point, not far from the eighth milestone on the northern road, by Fleenstown, Kilrue, and past Dunboyne; one horse, I hear, was killed. On the following Monday they were equally fortunate with a fallow deer, who ran over a most charming line, by Vesington to Moyglare—a very fast forty-five minutes. The first quarry, a red one, ran very disappointingly short.

Harking back to Meath, I have just learnt that Mr. Brown, of Elm Grove, not only fed the hungry on that miserable Friday—can there be an oyster bank so far inland?—but provided the material for another good hunting run, which was interrupted near Kildalkey village by darkness. On Saturday they were at Loughcrew, where Mr. Naper manages to keep a very fine head of game for his friends, *and for his foxes too.* The latter abounded, but no scent wherewithal to drive them. From Drumlerry Gorse they had a series of good hunting rings till light waned. On Monday they had a lawn meet at Bellinter, a lovely scene and well attended, Lord Suffield being among the visitors. I can only speak of the forenoon, when a sharp old fox slipped the field by crossing the turbid Boyne and gaining the shelter of Bective, when Goodall stopped the pack, as the riders, hard, soft, and middling, had not come up yet. A second fox, found in the Home Woods, was, I think, fast being run into as I cantered off, hoping to catch the Ward

Union hounds on my route homewards, but losing their good gallop by a few minutes.

In Western Meath Mr. Montague Chapman had, on the 3rd, a very fast gallop from Killynon, by Dysart, to ground at Mooretown, and a good hunting run from Clonlost to Reynella, when darkness stopped proceedings; the Hon. Mrs. Malone's chestnut going in the old form. In Louth, on the 31st, Mr. Filgate sent a fox from Charleville to Drumcar, on a good line, in twenty minutes. A new fox took them on to the woods of Barmeath; 1 hr. 20 min. in all. A third fox came on the same line, and occupied them for another hour, when he was given up, as scent in covert was utterly wanting, and the day wound up by drawing all the good coverts round Rokeby Hall blank.

On the 3rd, finding at Hilltown, they ran their fox for ten minutes, and killed; their second, after a long ring, was forced over Bellewstown racecourse to the Carnes, where the earths had been opened up, and no one, like Oliver Twist, "asked for more."

I hear very good accounts of the sport the "Queen's Bays" harriers are showing. On Thursday last they met on the lands of Mr. Fennell, of hospitable fame, and had a capital straight gallop by Tubbrick and Ballybrophy, killing their hare, and a second from Garryroan to Kilrue Wood.

Au reste, Mr. Hamilton Stubber, in the Queen's County, was very successful on his opening day, the 30th ult., so far as regards the show of foxes; and so was Colonel Chaplin in Kilkenny, whose pack running hard up to Kilcreen, was stopped only by the severe illness of Mr. Smithwick, a staunch supporter in his day (for, alas! it is, I hear, over) of fox-hunting. Lord Huntingdon has had two or three very good things, I hear, of late, notably a capital forty minutes from Limerick Hill; while the Kildare hounds had some ringing from Dunmurry on the 6th inst.

THE MARCHIONESS OF ORMONDE.

V.

"And so but half a score did see
As good a run as well could be."

Stag-hunting *in excelsis!*—Bective House and its Host and Hosts—Curraghmore Sport—Summerhill and its Snows—Scurry from *Ballycaghan*—Victims.

WHAT a blessed consummation it would be if grooms could be taught to "throw physic to the dogs," and not ram it down hunters' throats! These ideas have been suggested by the untimely fate of a friend's hunter, whose "stud" (groom) fancied nothing was so good for hunters as the old three-course system: three balls, an alterative, and diruetic—gallops, sweats, etc., to follow. He had probably a stock of old aloes balls by him, which perhaps never were made up of pure drugs; one of these proved fatal, bringing on internal inflammation. We have wisely banished lancets and fleams from our saddle-room cupboards (though they too have their uses occasionally, but very rarely); it were well if masters could eliminate the indiscriminate use or abuse of aloes, nitre, resin, antimony, arsenic, and such like abominations. In Jamaica, in the slavery days, there was on every large estate an hospital, known as the "Hot House," for the serfs when ill or maimed. A "white" doctor presided or inspected; but "the working man" was generally an old negro who had been more or less brought up to the therapeutic art as a

dispenser or hospital orderly, and fancied himself not a little in consequence. "Well, Cudjoe," said the overseer one day, going his rounds on horseback, "how did you treat Quashie B., who was sent in last night very sick?" "Why, massa," said the nigger, "I just gave him a spuke and a spurge (an emetic and drastic) and ordered his coffin!" Does not a stable parallel occur to not a few horse owners in their experience?

In my last week's notes I left the Meath hounds very busy with a young fox in the home woods at Bellinter. How he escaped, I know not, but he actually did manage, I hear, to run the gauntlet successfully and emerge into the open, and lead his pursuers a very fair burst of eight or ten minutes up towards Tara Hill, where he got to ground. Lismullen and Dowdstown produced little but ringing foxes and patient hunting, which is never lost on the pack, though it may stir the bile of the more ardent and impetuous sportsmen out.

I see one of your correspondents in England emphasises the fact that, while good men and true are occasionally seen joining in the pursuit of the stag, they do so apologetically as it were, and under protest. Such a state of things exists not in Ireland—at any rate, in the province of Leinster—and, while the legitimate sport flourishes amain, the illegitimate or semi-artificial pursuit can boast its votaries and constant attendants among many whom it would be rank heresy to call anything but good sportsmen, passed masters in all the canons and cabala of woodcraft and venerie. Indeed, the only apology heard is that horses and men are not equal to the task of following the muckle beast in his rapid excursions over peerless lines of strongly divided pastures, for rarely do the deer of Ashbourne affect the roads for any length of time; and as for the hyper-sensitiveness which affects extreme disgust at the common finale of a deer-hunt, depend on't, these critics are but rarely placed, save by accident, in such a painful position as to be riding for a mile or two alongside of a thoroughly beaten stag or hind, with the clamorous pack all

round it, snatching and snapping away at their quarry. To say that there is none of the excitement of finding your game, with all the accessories of gorse or woodland—that you are robbed of the tumultuous throbbing when you see a fine fox stealing away over a magnificent line, and the chequered pursuit that succeeds —that science and *quasi* divination are not called into play—and that finally fox-hounds carrying a good head get over the ground faster than most stag packs—is simply stating well-known facts, and pointing out the *differentia* of fox-hunting. On the other hand, say the stag-hunters, think of what Milton calls the "sober certainty of waking bliss," which a *good* five miles in the Ward Union country amounts to in not a few breasts, and weigh it against the many bad days, and middling days, and good days over unrideable lines, which all fox-hunters experience in every season. Think of the planning and arrangements necessary, the distances to be traversed, the railway journeyings at a pace which a fox-hound on a good scenting day would spurn. Think of your horses out of your stable, not from morn till dewy eve, but till hours late enough for a fashionable dinner party. Above all, recollect, you who run amuck at stag-hunting and calf-hunters, that Meynell was actually master of the Royal Buck-hounds from 1770 to 1772.

With these prefatory remarks, let me state that your scribe formed a unit in a group of some forty or fifty well-mounted men from Dublin and Bray, the Garrison, Meath, etc., as they trotted on from the meeting-point of the Ward Union hounds at Kilrew, on Wednesday, the 8th inst., for a mile or so, till our leader or fugleman jumped a small fence off a by-road, and in a minute more we could see the gaily coloured pack straining away and streaming away over the wide pasture fields of Mullinam, like greyhounds just slipped. The day was raw and cold, as if snow were suspended in the air, but the scent was breast-high, as on that famous day which made Billesdon Coplow a household word on hunting lips. A biggish brook and bank intervene, but stops

nobody apparently, and so we gallop on pleasantly till we reach the Ratoath road, which is a very bad exchange for the springy turf we have been stretching over just now. Half a mile, however, sees us jumping a bank into a wavy sort of field under the old Fairy House cottage, and following the gyrations of our red deer in the direction of Porterstown. Brooks or rhenes now intervene occasionally, and plump into one of them goes one of Meath's best-mounted and heaviest weights; but there are friendly arms on the bank, so man and horse emerge all right. The line now assumes the shape of the letter S doubled, as our deer races past the Ballymore garden wall—some three or four red-coats well in the van of pursuit (black preponderate in this hunt in the proportion of ten to one); a great number now availing themselves of a friendly lane leading into Ratoath. Here, some thought, the fun was over; it was really only beginning, though up to this point much country had been traversed, and very fast. Lara, who had been running in view for more than a mile, now caught his second wind, and, sweeping by the Fair Green, led the pack a third figure of the letter S, passing Lagore, Culm Hill, and Reesk, and then bending to the well-known Sutherland brook, strided over it and another less famous "water privilege," making his way to Killegland, and then, presently brushing past (though not near) the deer-park of Ashbourne, held on through Donnymore and Greenogue to New Barn, where he had taken refuge in an out-building. Among the few up at the finish were Messrs. Trotter, Morrogh, W. Butler, Kearney, M'Cullagh, with the Brindleys. The run, a magnificent one, is variously timed as one hour twenty-five minutes and one hour twenty-eight minutes. Few better things, if any, have been ridden this season anywhere.

In Louth Mr. Filgate had a capital day on the 6th, though the beginning was of evil augury—a fox chopped in a small gorse with a trap on his leg. The second draw was Footstown, whence a fox took them into Meath by Rathbrane over a fine line, eventually getting to ground near Carrickmagow; twenty-seven minutes,

done at a good pace. Drakestown produced only a ringer, who was not persevered with; but Skedog, which was one of their best starting-points last year, proved a better chance, as a fox broke from it at once, skirting Shanliss, Harlestone, and Newtown Chapel, crossing Cranagh and gaining the covert at Mooretown, and thence on to Taaffe's Gorse, whence he was pushed out dead beat, and presently rolled over. Time, forty minutes, of which thirty was done at great pace, unrelieved by a single check, as the string of beaten horses testified.

The Bellinter harriers met a sad *contretemps* on Tuesday last. As they were running a hare over the metals in the Trim country, a train swooped down on them, proving fatal to three, I believe. They had a capital hour and a quarter after the accident, and were stopped by darkness.

The Kildare hounds met on the following Tuesday, at Kilcullen Bridge. A very large field assembled in their honour. Kinnea Wood, an offshoot of Castle Martin, was first tried, and a ringing fox from it was killed on the edge of the Curragh. A second was turned up after a short pursuit from the Cemetery Gorse, while a third was hunted from Martinstown Gorse, over Carrick Hill, by Halverstown, to Colverstown, where he got to ground; forty-five minutes in all, with a few good bits in it.

On Wednesday the Meath pack were at Carlanstown. They had a capital thirty-eight minutes from Farrenalcock, and hunted patiently and well some rather ringing foxes from Rathmano and Shancarn, till darkness interfered.

On Thursday, the 9th inst., the Meath hounds met at Bective House, which for the last season or two has been tenanted by Lieut.-Col. Fraser, V.C. There is not a great deal of strong covert in the plantations and screens about, but it is so well preserved, and is so surrounded by foxes in the adjacent woodlands of Bellinter, Dowdstown, and Ardsallagh, that the chances of finding a fox on the premises are more than even. Those who have travelled by the Meath line to Navan cannot fail to re-

collect the whitely gleaming house, with fringing woodlands and grounds sloping down to the very banks of the Boyne, which they view at so apparently short a distance from the metals. This is Bective, and, like the Liffey, the sinuous Boyne has apparently tempted a large number of the landocracy to settle on its banks and make parks and pleasaunces for themselves and their posterity. I should have used the past tense, for I suppose not a few generations have lapsed since the fine-girthed timber and extensive woods of Bellinter were first planted. At any rate, for some two or three miles the Boyne water—which hereabouts is of nearly the same width and volume as the Thames at Nuneham (though weedy and foul as the Cam used to be)—is beautifully illustrated by gentlemen's places and parks, the chief of which are Bellinter, Bective, Ardsallagh, Dowdstown, and Boyne Hill. The early aspect of the morning was cheerless to a degree; white rime overspread everything, while in the distant east the hills were glistening with newly fallen snow—that is to say, when you could get a glimpse of them through the snow-dust which was falling every now and then in spray. This is our first vision of grim winter and its realities, and the contrast of the trees still loaded with leaf and the white earth was curious and strange. By eleven a.m. a radiant sun had dispelled much of these gloomy portents, though there were bits of the road in the shade where the ice bade defiance to the thermal influence.

The meet—a new one—was evidently most popular, for seldom does a rendezvous miles from town or village present a gayer or more animated aspect than did Bective House and its lawn in the forenoon, and the ladies ulstered and sabled, and the ladies in habits, did it special honour. I cannot now stop to dwell on the smartness of not a few of the equipages, the neatness of the ladies' horses, or the array of horsemen and second horsemen (the latter in unusual numbers) who figured on the scene. Let me turn to the hounds. In Bective they owned a fox, who had apparently chosen a very good line of open country for his

excursion; but probably these landaus and waggonettes and stylish pairs of horses had awakened him to his danger, and given him ten minutes' or a quarter of an hour's start. At any rate, Goodall did not persevere with him, so we went on to one of Mr. French's plantations at Ardsallagh, whence three foxes emerged in a cluster. The hounds settled to one, and him we escorted or followed into Bective over the railway—for hunt him we certainly did not, scent being of the lowest order. Another Ardsallagh fox took an opposite direction by the river, but we could not do anything with him either. From this point the hounds were trotted on to Churchtown, whence a grand old fox broke handsomely, and led his enemies over as fine a line of country as need be desired; but scent had not quickened in the afternoon, and the pace was not rapid by any means. His course lay by Philpotstown, Tulgard, Mr. Jones's farm, and so on to Meadstown, where, it is said, foxes were changed; be that as it may, *a* hunted one, if not *the* hunted one, was put to ground very soon after. Those who had long distances to ride home were pelted at intervals by snow, sleet, and rain—principally the latter, I think. To show how general good scent is on certain days, I may mention that on the red-letter Wednesday (last) of the Ward Union hounds, the Allenstown harriers—Mr. Purdon's—had an extraordinary run after an outlying fox; scent most serving. I think I noticed in my last the opening day of the Kilkenny hounds; their second (Nov. 1) far eclipsed it. Ballyhale was the meeting point, which is fairly handy for the Curraghmore hunt, and as a natural consequence the Marquis of Waterford and party were at the trysting-place, or rather at Killeen, the first draw. From it broke an old fox, who made apparently for Carricktriss, but was headed at the cross roads of Lismatige, and turned to the right over the Waterford and Kilkenny railway, whose gates being fastened, the hounds gained considerably. Onward the line led past Castlegannon, through Crowbally, then southwards as if for Knockbrack, but, after crossing a hill or two and some heavy bottom lands, the fox

gained the open earths at Tory Hill. One hour at good pace had told its tale on horses; so, when the question was put by Colonel Chaplin as to a second draw, no one held up his hand. From Windgap Gorse on the 8th, this pack had a capital ring, which the Marquises of Waterford and Ormonde, Lord A. Butler, Sir J. Langrishe, Colonel Chaplin, Messrs. Briscoe, Lalor, and others saw well. The hounds, I hear, reflect the greatest credit on John Tidd, their huntsman, both for handiness and condition. In Limerick, Sir David Roche had a capital hounds' day on his opening assembly. On the 7th his hard-riding field had their innings in a thirty minutes' scurry at express pace from Lisduan, the bitches sending their fox to ground, and their field homewards so satisfied that the master was not asked for another draw.

Lord Doneraile's hounds have been doing good work both in woodland and open so far, and of cubs and foxes they have scored eight brace.

A testimonial is being got up for Mr. Henry Briscoe, the late master of the Kilkenny hounds—of the Curraghmore pack before that. Few have done more for fox-hunting than Mr. Briscoe. Perhaps it may be to his tact, *savoir faire*, and genial nature that Kilkenny owes her present status in the hunting world—the *entente cordiale* among her pursuers of all classes and professions. Duke, the very popular Curraghmore huntsman, served his apprenticeship with Mr. Briscoe, and his lessons were not thrown away. John Tidd also learnt woodcraft under the same master, and learnt it well.

The question is often asked, "Where can I find stabling for ten or a dozen hunters out of Dublin?" If the metropolitan or home circuit be your aim (and this will include much of Meath, Kildare, and the entire Ward Union country), Dunboyne, Ratoath, and Dunshaughlin offer great facilities to the hunting man. In the latter village Mr. S. Kelly has just put up ten boxes, and I hear on good authority that the confiding stranger will not suffer in Mr. Kelly's hands, and that horses will be thoroughly well done at no exorbitant tariff.

There is a rumour afloat that Mr. Edmund Mansfield intends at the close of the season to resign the mastership of the Kildare hounds, which in his hands has proved an unequivocal success. It is to be hoped that it is merely a rumour resting on no solid foundation.

November 10th introduced us to as wintry a prospect as even that debatable land, the Herzegovina, could furnish. The wind was easterly and cuttingly cold, and, as one looked in that direction, lo! the eastern rampart of our island rose one huge white barrier, unbroken by a single bit of dark or lively colouring. A white rime overspread the fields, but that, of course, we had hopes of seeing disappear in an hour or two; but there was no disguising the fact that every sign and token admonished us that it was freezing very hard at ten o'clock a.m. How it fared with other pursuers I cannot tell; but my ten miles to the meet was over a road which presented the appearance of a newly made rink—the snow and rain which had fallen during the night having been frozen to a solid consistency. It was, however, very thin, and in a short time—barring a *mauvais pas* or two—horses got accustomed to it, and crunched through the mass as if used to that sort of going half their lives. Summerhill, the meeting-point of the Meath hounds, reached by a side gate in the park wall, the question was, Where are the hounds? for it was past eleven o'clock, and the rustics I had interrogated seemed to think they had not come at all—a conclusion I was inclined to draw myself as I cantered up one of the knolls in the park to gain a view, and found my horse throwing the balled snow out of his hoofs. A minute more resolved all doubt, for there in front of the court-yard were the hounds and staff, while a tide of mounted men were passing to and from the fine Italian entrance hall in quest no doubt of those cups of comfort which the herbalists of Fécamp and La Trappe and our cousins of Amsterdam have so cunningly compounded for our delectation. To be or not to be, was the burning question of the chilly hour. There was no disputing the substantial fact

of the snow everywhere, for our horses were all *apparently on castors*, raised a hand or two beyond their normal standard; but then travellers told us of pleasant green fields near Athboy, Trim, Kilcock, or some of those lower latitudes, and there seemed a general unanimity of opinion as to Summerhill being the frostiest and snowiest place in Meath. Unlike "Sweet Auburn"—

> "Here Mr. Frost his earliest visit paid,
> And parting snow-wreaths lovingly delay'd;
> Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
> Seats of my youth when every sport could please."

Very true, no doubt, if the sport were snowballing, or even gunning, for the extensive coverts look like abounding in pheasants and woodcock. But hunting—no! The dial hands in the court-yard clock had nearly met at noon when Mr. Waller resolved our doubts. Foxes are very soon routed out in the home woods—three, I think, starting off together. One went off on a good line out of the park, but was headed back, to the grief of its noble owner, in a quarter of an hour. Another is hustled out rather higher up, past Spring Valley, over the road, and on apparently for Garradice covert; hounds *are* running; the banks don't look pleasant or inviting to man or horse, but men press on and horses jump—and fall too, as a hard man from the Pytchley and Quorn packs soon found. Just as the run was warming into something pleasant, our fox, headed on his way, turned sharp into Summerhill, and there, after some hunting, we left him.

We can now take a look at our surroundings. The field is an unusually large one—more carriages than such weather would warrant our finding along the drives; sportsmen from Westmeath, Galway, Kildare, and Dublin appear on the scene. The cause is not far to seek; it is his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught's first visit to the pack of Royal Meath; and Royal Meath, if just a little turbulent and self-willed in a few minor points, principally pertaining to the "dirty acres," is loyal to the core, and curiosity and loyalty combined have tempted out all those "villagers gay"

who are making holiday of it, to the confusion, perhaps, of an early fox or two. We are now trotting on eastward for a couple of miles or so—our point Pratt's Gorse, which, cut down not very long ago, seems in famous holding order. It is a square of gorse, without tree or shrub, and near nothing but a solitary cabin. In a minute or two there is a whimper and a rustle, a false start or two; after that *it is* "gone away!" in earnest, and at express pace. The second fence is a rather large ditch and bank, which I see Lords Howth and Clanmorris flying in good style near each other. Presently the line bends towards the trees of Larch Hill, and by a lane there is a check of a few minutes. On again it takes us, now over the boundary fence of Larch Hill, and presently, at a sort of up-bank by the lake opposite the house, I see one of the best performers (horses) in Meath spread-eagled and sprawling. On past the house, across the Kilcock road, where I see a sportsman, who had been riding a rather hard puller in a Newmarket noseband, get an ugly-looking fall. Next, over some large green fields and wide open fences, in one of which a handsome bay mare, daughter of Roman Bee, that the Duke of Connaught was riding, dropped her hind legs (the place was very blind) and gave him a fall, and a good skirmishing run of a quarter of a mile or so on foot. But here we are at our starting point, Pratt's Gorse, and once more we are in pursuit, the line taking us towards Summerhill, but at very different pace—a promenade in fact. From Moneymore in the evening they had a racing twenty-five minutes to the edge of the Dalyston Bog, when it grew dark, and hounds were stopped. Mr. Trotter got a lead at a nasty drop fence (where Goodall was hung up), and never was caught. Among the horses that were fencing beautifully were those of three ladies, belonging respectively to Westmeath, East Meath, and Kildare. Captain Sawle's grey and Mr. Macneil's chestnut were carrying their owners admirably, and so was the Hon. Charles Bourke's chestnut mare My Lady, by The Marquis. Colonel Fraser got a nasty fall in the middle of a field from his horse pecking at a blind drain, and,

I regret to say, broke his collar bone. Col. Fraser lost a great part of last season's hunting from a broken arm—an accident in the field also.

I hear Mr. Hamilton Stubber had a good forty minutes and a kill from Deverill's Hill the day his pack met at Maryboro' Heath; and Mr. Filgate's splendid gallop from Platten, right through the cream of Meath, on Wednesday last, is a fertile theme for conversation in northern and eastern hunting circles. Of this more anon, I hope. From the Duhallow country I hear that every day has produced sport so far, with one single exception.

On Saturday, the 11th, the Kildare hounds—who, by-the-by, had a very good forty-five minutes from the Moat of Ardskull by Mullagh Mast on Thursday last, and found foxes abounding in Nine-Tree Hill—visited the edge of their best country, where Meath, Westmeath, and Kildare almost join boundaries. The meet was at the town or village of Enfield, a station on the Midland Great Western line; consequently every facility presented itself to pursuers, from remote Galway and comparatively neighbouring Dublin, with all the intermediate places thrown in, to attend the assembly. There were some strangers, and, if I mistake not, a few hard-riding men from the neighbourhood of Edenderry, who take their hunting pleasure mainly with Captain Dames's and Mr. Palmer's harriers; but the congregation was not anything like so large as might have been anticipated. Ryndville, the first draw, always holds a fox or foxes, but it is honeycombed with burrows, and a good run over a promising line ended in a coney hole. Cappagh Gorse, the scene of the wire catastrophe last season, was next drawn, and from it a fox broke in the direction of Agher; then, bending to the right in a line somewhat parallel to the Midland track, he won his way to Ballycaghan Gorse, and when pushed out of it beat the hounds out of scent. It was a very fast scurry, and Major the Hon. E. Lawless, Captain Sawle, and Mr. F. Rynd were about the

quickest in making the best of a good start. Grief was very visible by unmistakable signs and tokens—scratched faces, dirty coats, stoved-in hats, etc. The east wind was now blowing half a gale, and very cutting and keen withal. The hounds had been thrown into the huge forest-like gorse, and the field assigned their proper boundaries. Ten minutes pass away, and no sign. Ten more, and no music greets the ear. It is very cold, and we are getting somewhat lukewarm in our hunting zeal, huddling up into nooks of shelter, and wondering when the hounds would be taken away to some livelier and likelier spot. Horns were blown, I hear, and blown lustily; we heard them not. Who gave the impulse I know not; but presently every one is catching his horse by the head, feeling him with the cold steel, and fifty gees are in a minute or two galloping over that verdant ocean where the eye only sees a single cottage on an eminence for a considerable distance. The first fence, which generally engulfs one or two at least, if not more, is crossed safely and successfully, I think, by all there. For a mile or two we gallop on wildly to Cappagh Gorse, our companions a couple or two of the tail hounds. Here we find the pack had dwelt for a short time, but sent their fox quickly out of its shelter by Mr. Keenan's house, over the deep bottoms, past the Decoy Woods, on past Knockanally House, and so downhill into Hortlands. The pace must have been very fine indeed, the line grass all the way except some twenty yards or so; distance I should guess some five miles or more; but in what time this was covered I cannot say. Who saw it? Well, I believe only three saw it thoroughly —Lord Suffield, Mr. W. Forbes, and Will Freeman; and the first named, I fancy, pulled off just before the hounds ran into Hortlands. He was mounted on Colonel Fraser's chestnut horse, Famous, who won the twelve-stone Red-coat Race in Meath last year. Mr. Forbes was on Gridiron, a handsome son of Kildonan, and as good as he looks in any country, be it wall or bank, for some of his education was in Galway. A small cut, blind from

the fringing grass, proved fatal, I fear, to a very perfect hunter of Lord Langford's, a son of Solon's, and grandson of West Australian's. Mr. Paley, the eminent V.S., was telegraphed for to Dublin; and all will be glad if this very accomplished hunter, who had been fencing to perfection all day, can be brought round. A lady got an unpleasant-looking fall early in the day, but was not hurt. Rumour says a lady *was* badly hurt hunting in Westmeath this week.

On Saturday the Ward Union hounds met at the seventh milestone of the Ashbourne road, and, enlarging not very far off, had a nice gallop for about three miles or so, when they met a very long and decided check near the Fairy House Lane, and had to abandon pursuit, as the flat country was gorged with water, and the deer persistently ran into the brimming ditches and brooks, thus killing scent.

On Monday, meeting a party of about thirty at the Flat House, in mist and rain, they enlarged an untried red deer in a field near the Fairy House lane, who led off over a series of water jumps that wanted not a little stretch to cover successfully; a short horseshoe described, and then a brief excursion over the Meath line, when a colley dog had a cut at the "running deer," which was far too tempting to resist, and presently, in jumping an up-fence, she met with an accident, and so ended a very short pursuit—the terminus being aptly named "Quarry Land." No. 2 was a fallow deer, who had also a strong *penchant* for water ways, the very first obstacle being a brook, with a high bank opposite, too large to stride over; so horses had to be forced in, and then ridden out of the water up the bank. A very well-trained hunter of Mr. D'Arcy's allowed his rider to dismount and then jumped up after him. All were not so well mannered, and had the hounds been running at any pace, a good many would have been out of it; but just at this moment another coursing match was going on, to the confusion of the pack. Presently, by the Ten-mile Bush farm, where the pastures rival in

size those of the Vale of Aylesbury, the hounds began to run in earnest—past Rathbeggan, past Batterstown Parsonage, on to Crookstown, over the Trim road; then, after a short circle, she was taken after a very twisting gallop of some fifty-five minutes, of which Jem Brindley and Mr. W. Butler had considerably the best, a few others having come to grief at a double into the road.

"The sick bay," as the blue jackets term it, is already crowded with victims to blindness of fences, want of real condition, and the thousand and one chances and mischances which the mimicry of war brings in its train. Mr. Coppinger, one of the hardest of the Ward Union light weights, got a nasty fall on Saturday when hunting with this pack, and his leg was reported as broken; but I believe a squeeze and bruise was the extent of the injury. Lord Waterford got a very ugly-looking fall in his own country, but is quits, I hear, for a cut head and face; while Captains Slacke and Chichester were, I am told, also more or less knocked about. I myself was a witness to a very narrow escape from pendulous wire on a bank this afternoon.

VI.

"In spite of th' unpromising state of the weather,
Away broke the fox and the hounds close together."

Races and Rain—Punchestown Gorse—Ward Run—Galway Blazers—Meath West and East—Sir D. Roche!

A SHARP frost and a fall of snow so early in the season are as scaring as a skeleton or death's head at a banquet, or a garrulous *enfant terrible* who has seen no one knows how much, and won't be bribed or threatened into discreet silence; and yet this brief "cold snap" has done us yeomen service in clearing away a great deal of the obstacles to that smooth hunting progress which we so much desiderated. The November which the cynical poet inveighed against—

"No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease,
No comfortable feel in any member,
No shine, no shade, no butterflies, no bees,
No light, no leaves, no fruits, no flowers—November;"

is on us, with all its accessories of leaden skies, soppy fields, and darksome horizons. A week or ten days ago, the light streamed through aisles of arched foliage of many hues, like the subdued gleams of painted and stained glass. It was "the torrent's smoothness ere it rushed below," and now we are face to face with winter—the winter of our content. The tracery of the trees is fast revealing itself. Presently those black depths of with and

brambles and weeds will be comparatively bare and open, and the long fringing grass which now makes cuts and drains in fields almost invisible to horse and rider, will have disappeared. Riding straight over the country has been a service of danger; the crop of accidents has not been a small one by any means.

Let me commence with a very brief outline of sport in Louth, which want of space compelled me to postpone last week, merely alluding to a single day in an eventful week. That day was Wednesday, the 8th, when Mr. Filgate brought his pack to Platten. They found instantly a fox in the laurels near the house, and drove him into the covert. Before leaving it finally, the fox tried the earths, and made a complete circuit of the place; but at last he broke by the Glen, and then set his mask westward, leaving Duleek on his left and Cruicerath on his right. Away he raced over the rocks of Carragubbin, where a five-feet coped wall arrested all the field save Mr. Robert Jameson, who got over with a fall, but was not hurt, and from this point he had the hounds to himself, as they raced by Garballagh and Weston into Somerville Woods. Here there was a check, but the pack soon got right again, and sent their quarry through the woods into the open by Bessborough and Belrath, rolling him over at Lismool; one hour and fifty-five minutes in all, one hour and five minutes up to Somerville. By 1.30 p.m. pursuers and hounds were on their way homewards, which fact speaks well for the satisfactory nature of this splendid chase.

On the 11th they were at Churchtown. The fox was twice headed in his efforts to break from the gorse, so that Mr. Filgate drew off the pack. From Clonbracton they had a ring; in Rathony they found again, and had a ringing pursuit by Reastown, Cardistown, and Tullykeel, the fox being saved by the appearance of a fresh one, who took off the hounds towards Coolderry, where he turned by Aclint and Nicholastown into Knockably, and here the hounds were stopped, after one hour fifty minutes in all, as darkness was coming on apace.

"Nocte pluit totâ, redeunt spectacula mane," says the old Latin hexameter, and so was it in the province of Leinster, in the island of Ireland, on the night of the 13th of November and the morning of the 14th. Let the hydrometrists tell us how many tons of water fell in twenty-four hours! My weather gauge was a couple of coats soaked like sponges in an unusually short time on Wednesday afternoon; and even on Thursday morning, at seven o'clock a.m., or a little after—for I will not assume the virtue of early hours, not having it—the outlook was what sailors call decidedly "dirty"—leaden skies, and scarcely any apparent interval 'twixt earth and heaven, and the rain driven against the windows by a strong west wind as if by a powerful hose. "Sport of kings, eh?" is the uppermost idea as one stands in the land of sleepy debate, dubious whether it shall be instant immersion or a retrograde movement into bed. Sport of kings, indeed! Well, methinks I'll appoint a vice-king to-day, and enjoy myself like a rational subject for the nonce. These are sleep-begotten fantasies, and one plunge into the Lethe of cold water banishes them, bringing to one's recollection the consoling balsam of proverbial wisdom in the old verse, "rain at seven, fine at eleven."

There were two hunting events of major interest and attraction (if anything could be attractive to-day) to all residents in what I may term the home hunting circuit, namely, a by-day with the Ward Union hounds at Warrenstown Gate, to capture, if possible, an outlying deer, and a meet of the Kildare fox-hounds at Naas. Now, the Ward Union country is very flat, very floodable, and my experience of yesterday inclined me to think that on these deluged plains scent would not be very serving, nor riding very pleasant to man or horse. (I have heard since that the capture was effected without much sport.) On the other hand, to hack over well-nigh a score of miles in such torrents, and to find your natural avoirdupois considerably increased by water concealed about your person, is not a very inviting experience. On the whole,

however, Naas and its charms kick the beam. Hunting in rainstorm or windstorm is a mockery, a delusion, and a snare; but, if it is to be done, there is no better neighbourhood than Naas, with its surroundings of light gravelly soil, which it takes half a deluge to make really deep or holding to the hoof. A meet at Naas is what Yankees call a "big thing" in the ordinary way; to-day it was almost—to borrow from the same vernacular—a one-horse affair. Few came from Dublin, Sir Michael Hicks Beach proving an exception; none, I think, from the Queen's County, which is generally represented in force. Westmeath sent none, Meath but one or two. The Curragh was not so liberal in its patronage as usual. Dunlavin coursing meeting kept away the representatives of the Tynte family, who occasionally, with their party, made a small field in themselves; but, *en revanche*, Sir Charles Burton and Mr. Horace Rochfort did duty for Carlow, while Mr. Frewen (well known in hunting circles on your side of the ditch), the Messrs. Power, and Captain Frank Cole and Mrs. Cole were among the visitors; and Mr. Rea Palliser had come from his home in the Curraghmore country. It is not a day to survey the beauty of either Naas or Kildare. The houses seem to have their hatches battened down for the foul weather; the streets are desolate. The few ladies out are waterproofed, so as to be almost nunlike. By 11.20 a.m. we are *en route*, a very small band, for Punchestown Gorse, a mile or more distant. Five or six enterprising ladies have now joined the cavalcade, and make the masculine array seem smaller by comparison. The first field off the road on our way to the dear old gorse is now in tillage, and as we toil over and through its furrows a sense of gratitude must arise that we have so little arable land in this country. We are allowed to pass (perhaps not hindered from passing would be more correct) through the well-known wicket gate in the corner of the field into the large grass field bordering the run home, and this in itself is a mercy, because the ugly rush made to it on the proclamation of a find in the

gorse—the kicking, crowding, squeezing, malison, and evil speaking consequent upon "the real jam" there—is neither pleasant in itself nor advantageous to sport. I suppose we were on parole, and certainly no one went far into the field. Perhaps the field was so unusually small that mischief was not much feared. The portion of the gorse in sight would not harbour a rabbit, much less a fox, as it has been recently cut down. Beyond, I believe there is some strong good lying, and now we can look about a little, for the rain has mitigated somewhat, and there goes the Curragh gun for noon. It is seldom that a field in this part of Kildare does not contain a few horses of name and character in the chasing world. Mr. T. Beasley is riding New Purchase, a very smart young bay horse, who has won a few events in his time, though he has had the bad luck to have been disqualified for three or four from careless weighing and mistaken entry, and I know not what else. Mr. Dundas is on Ironmould. Malone, a jock who is less known than many, but whom Kildare farmers patronise largely (they are not a very indiscriminate class either), is schooling a sharp little bay full of action, but rather small for our modern notions.

But no more! Music mingles with the west wind—a fox is tallied away by somebody, and Mr. Percy La Touche, a very quick starter, is half across the wide pasture in front of us. The chase began with a gallop over the racecourse towards Eadestown or Arthurstown; but a quick turn to the right decides the direction, and, led by Mr. Blacker, on his trusty grey, we are now careering on towards Keely's farm, *en route* peradventure to "The Banks" or Stonebrook. Another incline to the right disposes of that theory, and now we are galloping over a few green fields, having crossed the Ballymore Eustace road, and skirting a square bog plantation full of heather, known as Silliott Bog or the Baron's Bog (the Baron de Robeck owns and planted it), in the centre of which the hounds, brought into strong relief by the russet heather and peat, are at work very industriously, and

evidently near their fox. Ten minutes' delay here till he is routed, when his line takes us by Mr. Coffey's farm towards Mullacash, where he tries a sewer which nipped a very promising run in the bud last season. It is closed tight to-day, and presently, after jumping in and out of a road, we are in a network of small fields, and while in this district are every minute at a fence. Soon we emerge into larger fields at Dunshane (Mr. Maunder's), over which the hounds stream away at good pace; then, jumping a small wall, we very soon gain the deer-park of Harristown, and, running by its wall and the ruined castle, we again cross a road leading to Ballymore Eustace (two newly made banks which flank it require some handiness on the part of horses), and in a few fields are by the side of the wall of Harristown Park, with the Liffey below, and the Black Thorns on its further bank.

After some slow hunting in the park of Harristown, this good fox was given up. A Stonebrook fox crossed the river Liffey, and did not give anything very meritorious in the way of a chase; nor did, as I learn, an Elverstown evening fox. The first was a very pretty hunting run, with fencing enough for a dozen average gallops, in which the ladies and the visitors took their part right well, Miss Kilbee and Mrs. Davis representing the former, while Mr. Rochfort, of Clogrennan, and Mr. Frewen were in the forefront of the fray all through. Mr. Rochfort seems to have made up his mind to apply Mr. Elmore's theory and practice about hunters, namely, that to keep them right you must always keep them going, as Mr. Rochfort's grey seems to be everlastingly galloping, jumping, or taking a railway constitutional!

The Carlow record is something like this. On the 28th ult., after drawing Altamont blank, they found a good fox at Killrick, who ran the banks of the Slaney for a couple of miles, then crossed under Ballynoe, and gave the field a good hunting pursuit of some seven miles, ending at Knocklow, where he got to ground. On the 31st, after some hunting at Ballykealy,

they had a sharp forty minutes from Castlemere. On the 7th inst. they met at Charlesfort, and had a good forty-five minutes' ring from a small patch of gorse near it.

Post nubila Phœbus! After the rain and wind storms it was quite refreshing to bask again in the rays of even a wintry sun, to see a glimpse of blue sky, and to feel that the elements had, like the Sublime Porte, granted a short armistice to us storm-tossed, rain-beaten mortals. My path to-day led me to Rathbeggan, where the Ward Union men were to congregate to hunt their tri-weekly stag. Rathbeggan is only a very short stage distant from such fixtures as the Black Bull, the Flat House, and the other townlands and farm and gentlemen's houses beyond Dumboyne, which give names to the meeting places. The traces of the rain floods were all too apparent on the left-hand side of the road as you journeyed from Dublin, much of the fine pasture land being a mere for the time being, while some of the country looked like Holland with the dams cut, as, say, when William the Silent flooded it to rescue Antwerp or some beleaguered city from the Spanish attack. A little further on is the well-known Ten-mile Bush Farm, owned by a Mr. Boylan, who, *en bon Chrétien*, if he has raised ramparts round his dominions, and bounded them by deep and broad streams, has gated almost every field, and—oh, portentous circumstance!—the gates are in useable, every-day order, opening and shutting readily, not locked or secured by chains, or tied by a *suggawn* (Anglicè, a straw-rope), which is probably renewed twice or three times annually when the gate is really used. The pasture fields of this farm are of very great extent, as any dairyman from Leighton Buzzard or Newport Pagnell would admit, with admiration at their richness of hue and splendid quality of herbage. Here our chase after the red deer, "His Lordship," began in earnest, the hounds racing after him over these fine reaches. Through three gates had we proceeded at a very smart hand gallop, which stretched the slow ones, and over a considerable

distance, when we are confronted suddenly, and I must say most unpleasantly, by a bank studded with quicksets and gorse, beyond it a river, and a bank on its far side. The whole bank on the near side seemed honeycombed by rabbits' burrows. To the strangers the depths of the swollen river were quite unknown. I daresay at times it is quite fordable, and a handy horse can be worked in and out without much bother or difficulty. Some men who knew all about it pulled up before we got to this huge obstacle, and diverged I know not whither. All I can aver in the truth of hunting story is that it seemed to arrest all alike—the cautious, the bold, the rash, the impetuous, the overweening, the reckless, the steeplechase rider, and the many-seasoned huntsman; along its banks we seemed to spread out like a fan, looking for that apparent impossibility, a practicable spot. In a few minutes I saw a very small division galloping on the far side. (They had, as I subsequently learnt, the key to the fortress.) My companions in misfortune and prison turned their backs on the relentless barrier, and tried to flank it. Here a second river, with boggy banks, interposes; but a good grey, ridden by Mr. Robertson, nicking a good take-off and landing, showed us the way over. A very hard-riding welter attempts to follow; but, though he lands on the far side with the reins in his hands, his hunter is taking a cold bath, and cooling his master's saddle for him. A third experimenter in hydrostatics tried a seemingly fordable spot; but he was seen swimming very soon.

> "Like whales in the water, some floundered about;
> Thrown *off* and thrown *in*, they were also thrown *out*."

After all, an easy spot was presently discovered a few hundred yards higher, and it turned out most fortunately that we craners, shirkers, and hydrophobists were not doomed to pay a very heavy penalty for our discretion as we were riding on the arc of the circle, and came in with the chase very soon. Batters-

town is left behind; a road, which I should think went to Dunshaughlin, is crossed—and a very nasty fence led out of it; for perhaps a couple of miles the line leads over beautiful level pastures, intersected by deep and broad water-cuts. Then there is a short check. We are now on the edge of Ballymaglasson (Mr. Thompson's residence) Lands, and a couple of fences that want doing lead us in and out of a wood, or rather a skirting plantation (I fancy not a few stopped at this point, having had already a fine gallop). Then on we go over a line of most enjoyable country — the fences smaller, and mostly singles—till we pass the Hatchet, a celebrated meet of the Meath hounds, with Coulstown and Mulhussey Castle to our left. At this period of the run His Lordship was probably headed, for he made a very abrupt turn to the right. Some slowish hunting, though without casting, succeeded, the line all the time being over the most inviting fields, and the most pleasant of fences. "Wire!" about this time, I hear Charlie Brindley shouting, who was on his very well-known grey, "Wire! 'ware wire!" but there was a capital spot in the fence, and no harm occurred.

When I first took an observation, though it was necessarily a very hurried one, we were galloping over that beautiful bit of upland between the fox coverts of Culmullen and Beltrasna, and going along at very good pace indeed, though far from straight. The next landmark or place of significance that we entered was Woodtown, the deer apparently leading us on to Summerhill; here, however, an inclination to the left brought us to a rather lower level, and we passed through the little village of Moynalvey, which had the honour of giving a name to a well-known stag a season or two past; the entire population, including "the Force" (the constabulary is so named here), and "the fair" abandoning their flirting (none but the brave deserve the fair, you know), gossip, knitting, or potato washing, to gaze on the chase as it floated by. Time, too, is on the wing. Are we never

to get on terms with this long-winded wanderer? At last! In perhaps a mile or a mile and a half from Moynalvey we view him at the other side of a quickset hedge loafing along most contentedly, and apparently very fresh; but the pack see him too, and in a few fields they force him into the yard of a small farmhouse, the only one in view; and, Jem Brindley and his father being as usual close to the pack, His Lordship is secured, with only a few scratches about his ears, to repeat a similar performance later on in the season, we may fondly hope.

One hour and forty-two minutes, says the timekeeper, Mr. Morrogh, who has been in front all through, on a very neat, small, bay horse, and I know his watch is accuracy itself. On the map it is very hard to estimate the distance, for His Lordship did not run straight from point to point, like a fox—far from it; but even on the map the distance covered measures something very considerable, and I should say that it would not be easy to walk the exact track of the deer very much under a score of miles. The distance ridden, allowing for short cuts and other such helps, could not have been much (if at all) under fifteen miles. The line was over the very cream of Meath, and we skirted a number of fox coverts, such as Culmullen, Beltrasna, Pratt's Gorse, and Larch Hill. Out of a large field, I do not think more than fifteen or sixteen pursued to the capturing point, among whom—for I cannot pretend to catalogue them —were Messrs. Morrogh, Meldon, O'Reilly, Hone, Coleridge, Daly, Macneil, Bayley, Morris, M'Cormick, Hanaway, Percy Maynard, Murland, T. Turbitt, and a few more. Mr. M'Geer, riding a chestnut of Captain Davis's, went admirably up to a point. The fencing of Mr. Macneil's chestnut was a thing to look at. Mr. Allen, who is no feather, was very well carried, and so was Mr. Meldon, who rode as if some fairy had graciously taken off his three or four stone of overplus (if we set the standard at 12st. 7lb.). A General Hess grey of Dr. Daly's was going extremely well, and so was a young one of Mr. Hanaway's, and a

small thick bay horse of Mr. M'Cormick's. Captain Wardrop sent a four-year-old along most merrily for a few miles, and Mr. Dundas was pleasantly carried by Mistletoe. A long ride home to stables and train followed; but the evening was beautifully fine, and the sky, shot with rose and maze, may be said to have tinted to-morrow with prophetic ray—the prophecy of frost versus rain.

In Galway Mr. Persse's career has been almost uninterruptedly successful. On the 4th he was at Ballyduggan, in the Loughrea country, from which I recollect seeing a most spirit-stirring fox chase and kill some two or three seasons ago; but, strange to say, it was drawn blank on this occasion. Hollyhill, however, held a brace, one of which ran over a charming line by Carra Gorse, and was turned up just as he was nearing Ballydonelane, twenty-five minutes of beautiful going. On the 6th he visited his Athenry country, and found three foxes at Cregmore, one of which he hunted with bad scent for an hour, and put to ground at Coolarne, where Mr. Meldon (equally entered to fox and stag) insisted on everyone taking something comforting and cheering, and then provided a fox in one of his coverts, which the bitch pack rolled over in twenty-two minutes. On the 8th he went to his Tuam country, and, as a matter of course, found at once in Gallagh, and had two rings with fresh foxes, threatening mischief; but the wavering was only temporary, and, sticking to their original quarry, they sent him at top speed through Brown's Gorse, and raced into him in the open, close to Kilclooney, one hour and fifteen minutes from the find, with only two slight hesitations.

The entry of this year is doing very well; and if the trappers will only leave foxes alone, a very high-class season of sport may be anticipated in Galway, judging from present appearances.

On the 13th inst. the Westmeath hounds were at Pakenham Hall (Lord Longford's park), where the hunting was principally of the covert order; but from Gillardstown, which is rather celebrated for its stout foxes, they took one away at good pace towards Kanturk, thence by Berrison Lodge straight into Knock

Ion, where he got to ground—twenty minutes of galloping without the sign of a check; a wire, which had to be cut, gave the hounds a good lead, of which they were never deprived. Mr. Montague Chapman, the master, the Hon. Mrs. Malone and her husband, with General Curzon Smyth, were about the nearest to them throughout the scurry. On Saturday they were at Galston and Gaybrook, and had some covert hunting; but scent disappeared in the evening, when they had got a fox to face the open fairly.

Meath appears to me to be suffering from an easily cured complaint—a plethora of foxes—and Goodall is applying the lancet freely; but until a certain number of these superabundant foxes have been improved off the face of the earth and the remainder taught to seek their safety in instant and protracted flight, first-class sport cannot be generally expected, as the seasoned old foxes slip away directly, and leave the hounds to deal with a rabble of uneducated cubs, who relieve each other at intervals, and do little more than run circles with home for centre. I hear, however, that forty minutes on Monday (the day they met at Bengerstown) was really good, while Wednesday's sport was, *on dit*, of quite superior stamp and complexion. I have already narrated something of my personal experiences and observations in the very fine stag-hunt which the Ward Union men had that day, sipping or skimming (whichever analogy you please, gentle readers) the cream of the Dublin and Meath counties as they went along; so, labouring under the heavy disability of not being ubiquitous, I regret I cannot give you as vivid or graphic a sketch of the "day's doings" as I should like. The pack met on that day at Killallon, where a clump of trees on a mound and a lonely chapel formed, some two years ago, if my memory serves me truly, a sort of pivot or buoy—to borrow a yachting simile—for some twenty or thirty red-coated sportsmen in their annual chase. Well I recollect the scene, and poor Rufus Montgomery (whom Meath and Dublin still mourn), the cheeriest and lightest-hearted of the

party, though he had not much expectation of winning, and I think he merely entered a hunter for the ride and sociability of the thing. I refer to the fact of the country being the theatre for a red-coat race to illustrate its character and class. The hounds, it would seem, found a good fox directly they were in the gorse, and, forcing him out of it, spun him along at a pace which a racing man who rode it described to me as extremely fast, scent being at its highest and best. The line lay by Ballinlough Castle, the residences and parks of Lord Vaux and Sir Charles Nugent, till it led into the woods of Killua (Sir B. Chapman's), where the coverts were being shot; and, to avoid clashing with the gunning interests, the hounds were stopped, with a very beaten fox in front of them. Thirty-five minutes over such a country at such a pace is not a bad allowance of sport; but Kilgar Gorse, Sam Reynell's (great men must not be Mistered) celebrated covert, gave them a wind-up of fifty minutes of good hunting by Lough Crew into Clonabraney; so I hope I have shown cause sufficient why Meath should register this especial Wednesday as a red-lettered day in her calendar. I spoke of the prospects of frost *versus* rain in my ride homewards on Wednesday evening. Alas! I must never set up again for a weather prophet, seeing the Thursday that succeeded was about the soakingest day that has come out of the heavens for a small age.

On Friday, the 17th, the Meath hounds made a nearer approach to the metropolis than they have done so far this season—Dunshaughlin, the congregating spot, being thirteen and three-quarters of Irish mileage N.W. of Dublin, on the old Enniskillen coach road. Its Celtic spelling is Dunshaghelyn, and the nuncupation has something to do with St. Patrick's nephew, St. Seachlan, whose uncle fox-hunters should duly honour, as, when he banished snakes and other vermin from the saintly soil, he spared the fox. The distance from Dublin was just sufficient to banish the pic-nicking-out-for-the-day element, while it presented no difficulty to hunting men properly so called, as the Navan line

was available in the neighbourhood, while Ratoath, Dunboyne, and Dunshaughlin itself abound in good healthy boxes, where horses can be made exceedingly comfortable if sent on overnight. A frosty morning ushered in a glorious forenoon, with such accompaniments as the most transparent luminous atmosphere and a very warm sun. Scent *might* be good, but all the chances and prognostics were dead against such a happy consummation. Dunshauglin is a village, and within a mile of it is one of those imposing semi-Gothic structures for in-door relief for the poor which are so lavishly dotted over Ireland. Between the two is a small gorse, well isolated and very holding, which rejoices in the title of the "Poorhouse Gorse." Seldom was a well-mounted field seen to greater advantage, or in brighter or more becoming contrasts of colour than in the green pasture field outside the fox-haunt during the five or six minutes between "leuing" the dog pack in and the find and "gone away." The carriages are a long way off (a mercy, perhaps), and some 100 or 120 of about the best-mounted men going are flashing about in the field, in scarlet and black. Kildare has mustered pretty strongly here to-day, sending, amongst others, Lord Cloncurry, the Hon. C. Bourke, and Mr. W. Forbes to the fray. The garrison of Dublin spares a certain number of Inniskillings and 3rd Dragoon Guards from parade and riding school; and Captain Graves Sawle represents the staff, Colonel Forster the viceroyalty. Lord Langford's party from Summerhill is a large one; among them are Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Lord Francis Lennox, and the Hon. Captain Rowley. The Ward Union men are quite at home here, for they occupy the soil we ride over; but there is no more time to survey the fair scene, the goodly array. *He* has gone away; four or five couple of the dog pack are out of the gorse, and if that is not enough to hunt any fox without the field, I know nothing about it. At any rate, so thinks the hard-riding division, headed by Lord Howth, as they skim over a bank and ditch, which is succeeded by a very large one, with an embankment on the far side. In a very few fields

we are in Lagore Park (Mr. Thunder's place), and here our fox, after a few rambles round and round, gets to ground. Another follows suit. Let us leave these many-burrowed woods, and speed on to the Reisk Gorse. Alas! one of our gallant cavalcade can no longer accompany us. Mr. French, of Ardsallagh, one of the staunchest supporters of the fox interest in Meath, has met with a serious accident, and is now lying at the Lodge of Lagore with his leg broken in two places. Dr. Daly is soon on the spot; Mr. Thunder's comfortable family coach takes the veteran sportsman to his home, some seven or eight miles distant; all good wishes will accompany him; but all this fortunate combination of circumstances cannot undo the serious mischief, and if the owner of the kicker is given to reflections, they cannot be pleasant. Now, most people who are in the habit of hunting with any popular pack in Ireland know one or two horses who are *notoriously* dangerous of approach; they avoid them. Strangers cannot be so forewarned, and may suffer like Mr. French to-day. Last year Captain Tathill had the narrowest of escapes from the playful heels of a young horse. Surely society should combine against the owner of an *inveterate kicker at men, horses, or hounds*, if he persists in mingling in the crowd after due warning. Damages were recovered in the South of Ireland very lately on similar grounds; if a vicious-habited dog make a master liable to an action, why not a horse? I talk not now of over-fresh coltish horses of exuberant spirits, but of confirmed outlashers.

A mile or twain, through pleasant fields mostly, brings us to the Little Reisk Gorse; ten minutes sees the field galloping fast for full a mile to a swollen brook or river, which some cross by bridge, some ford and with difficulty. Half a mile beyond this point is Kilbrew Hill, an old park, with groves on the top. The hounds meanwhile had run by a small stick covert, and the well-known answer of a covert-keeper to an interviewing M.F.H. was never, perhaps, better illustrated. "Are there any foxes in the Bog covert now, Pat?" "Is't fawxes, yer-anner? they do be

jostling one another down there." So it was to-day. Foxes were afoot in all directions. After climbing Kilbrew, the hounds sent one on towards Somerville, when he swung back, ran some water meadows where brooks abounded (*brook upon brook*, by the way, is bad heraldry surely), and *unus e pluribus* was killed as he neared the stick covert. Corbalton Gorse, the last draw, produced more foxes than sport. I can only allude here to a capital day's sport which the Galway hounds enjoyed last Tuesday from Derrahiney, Colonel Featherstonhaugh's place, and from Longford.

Saturday was a day of brilliant scent and sport, at least within a wide radius of Dublin. The Kildare hounds met an immense crowd at Kingswood in fog and mist, in which it was no easy task to ride straight or follow the hounds, save by the sense of sound. The "day's doings," to which I shall recur in my next letter, were a sharp scurry from Belgard, through Dr. Kennedy's place, to the Green Hills, where their fox got to ground. They went a very quick gallop from Miss Gould's Gorse to a point near Castle Bagot, where the hounds ran into their fox. The third was a fine run from Johnstown Kennedy, through Coolmine, to Saggart, when night intervened. The Ward Union hounds had, on the same date, an extremely sharp 35 minutes from the neighbourhood of Ashbourne to a point near Garristown Hill. Here a view was obtained of their deer, and 15 more minutes succeeded, as fast as could be desired.

Sir David Roche had a splendid pursuit last Friday from Ballingarry Gorse to Adare Manor (Lord Dunraven's)—to which I shall refer by-and-by—eleven miles, and a crowning kill.

The Westmeath hounds had a couple of good gallops on the 15th, when they met at Moate; the second, from Kavedonully Gorse, ended in a kill, after a very good thirty-five minutes; while Mr. Filgate, on Friday last, after killing two foxes (one a good one, too), and sending another to ground after a short pursuit, finished a very fine hunting run of 1 hour 40 minutes by rolling over a rare stout fox from Blackhall.

VII.

"Let statesmen on politics parley,
Let heroes go fight for renown;
While I've health to go hunting with Charley,
I envy no monarch his crown."

Hunting bravery—Belgard—Kickers and Kickees—Sir D. Roche—The Fairy House—Somerville scenery—Kilkenny sport—Shiner.

It was Somerville, I think, the classic bard of hunting, who first taught us to look upon the chase as the noble mimicry of war.

"My hoarse-sounding horn
Invites thee to the chase, the sport of kings,
Image of war without its guilt,"

says the author of this unrivalled poem, in the turgid language of his day, and if there be but one Milton of hunting, surely Jorrocks is his prophet, for he has made the quotation referred to a household word among us. And yet, perhaps, a closer parallel might be found in the institutions of chivalry, which, having faithfully served its purpose in the darker periods of mediæval history, exists no longer in concrete form, though much of its better part and spirit can never know extinction or decay so long as gentleness and manliness find their embodiment in what we call a gentleman. For, in the first place, horses and cavalry are merely accidents, splendid accidents, no doubt, of war, and not of its essence; whereas in chivalry, the horse was as essential to the knight as his

lance or his armour, for a "grabby" in those days belonged to a different class and caste. Then, again, the armourer in those times was as great and important a personage as our own Bartly and Peel, Tautz Anderson and Hammond, all rolled into one, while grooms, pages, esquires, all find their counterparts, more or less, in the hunting field of to-day. A perusal of Froissart and other chroniclers of the period, assures us that Sir Brian de Bois was just as particular about the sheen of his morion, the burnish of his mail, as is the Hon. Crasher about the shade of his tops, the length of his bows, the squareness of his tie, in the century we live, move, and have our being in. No doubt the knight with his blazon of heraldry, and his smart esquire and page, was a very gallant sight to look upon, and that fair eye of chatellaines and bower women followed him as he rode over the castle moat, making his clumsy Flemish beast caracole as it was duly taught in the *manège*. But will not half a dozen of our modern hunting dandies, with their smart second horsemen, bear comparison with them even in the matter of bravery and burnish, putting aside the enormous superiority in horseflesh which modern chivalry possesses? No! Conservative as is the modern hunting world in general, few will, I think, gainsay the assertion that a popular fixture in the shires (be they English or Irish—for we, too, claim our shires) is in fine weather a gayer and fairer sight than was joust or tournament, with lists, heralds, and queens of beauty in the elder days—just as it excels in cultivated eye and taste the barbaric splendour of elephants in cloth of gold, and all the magnificence and splendour with which the Orient invests its hunting celebrations.

These reflections have been caused by sundry recent meets in this country, whose size, volume, quality, and smartness show not only the exceeding popularity of hunting in this island, but the enormous strides which the study of hunting properties has made of recent years. A late master of a crack pack in England made the same observation to me, as the sight impressed him greatly. As a sign of national wealth and prosperity we hail it with delight,

and as a proof also that we are assimilating to the manners and customs of our elder and wealthier sister, whom we resemble in so many things barring in this year "those *Bonds*," from which, thank goodness, we are mainly *free*. If we chose to pursue the analogy further we might easily do so, seeing that recent rapid scurries have left their marks on full many a pursuer, and that the knight of the rueful countenance is no stranger to the array; in fact, as somebody said the other day, between swollen lips, scratched faces, black eyes, and general contusions, a strange "interviewer" might, only for the horses, fancy a lively little "glove fight" had recently been enacted in the neighbourhood.

Such a monster meet took place at Kingswood on Saturday, the 18th; and though the frame of a fine park and the groundwork of a smooth lawn were wanting to make the picture complete, there was a very imposing congregation in front and alongside of Mr. Walsh's residence, very near the sixth milestone on the Naas and Dublin highway; and had the Hyades only withheld their watery influences, and the fog generated thereby only raised its curtain for a few hours, the scene of this morning might be reckoned among the most picturesque and pleasant which the hunting panorama unfolds. But soaking rain, followed by dense vapour, are not enlivening conditions; and the show of purple (pink if you will), and burnish of steel, and sleekness of hunters' coats suffered greatly from the water-laden atmosphere. The proximity to Dublin attracted naturally a very great crowd, and on a moderately fine forenoon the master of the Kildare hounds may always reckon on a large field, and a queue of carriages that would not discredit Bond-street or Regent-street at their shoppingest hour (of course, I mean only in point of number); but to-day's field was unusually large, and smarter in its component element than one usually sees. The gallant defenders of Dublin came thither in all arms—gunners, engineers, heavy dragoons, lancers riflemen, infantry, and staff—and in such numbers that we think the metropolitan military authorities must favour the rational theory

that for cavalry officers the hunting field is an apter parade ground and more practically useful than barrack square or riding school. The Inniskillings had been entertaining the Duke of Connaught and a large party at the Royal Barracks on the previous evening, and that may partly account for the large attendance of soldier officers; for his Royal Highness's mail phaeton was at the meet with exemplary punctuality, and soon afterwards Captain Ward Bennett brought up the Inniskilling coach, full inside and out as it could hold, while Captain Wardrop followed suit with the 3rd Dragoon Guards; the outriders of the viceregal carriage pioneer their handsome horses, and after them follows a mass of equipages too numerous to take stock of just now. Of hunting men and hunting women there were many scores assembled, "never mind the weather" being apparently their motto and slogan, so long as the tambourine can be kept rolling and sport and excitement sustained without flagging or intermission. Among the "visitors," in opposition to the *habitués*, were General Herbert, Mr. Frewen, a pursuer or two from Meath, and one or two from Galway's remote bounds.

We are in an atmosphere like a vapour bath, but as the fog won't disappear, and hunting the fox is our object and purpose, a beginning must be made, and with this view the master sets the *cortége* in motion towards Belgarde, which is the first draw. Belgarde has always been a *pièce de résistance* for the Kildare hounds, seldom visited without finding foxes; and, though not quite equal to "the Cheshire breeches," that the Laureate, with perhaps a tendency to poetic licence, declares "Lasted us three days a week," Belgarde has deserved well of the master and members of the Kildare hunt; for it is, in the first place, close to the meeting-point, and it thus enables the master to show something of a fox chase to the crowds who throng the Dublin road, and who are quite satisfied to ride or drive homewards after viewing a scene or two of the first act. It has produced good stout foxes, I believe; but for my own part I never saw a satisfactory run from it, the

situation and the crowds on the road partially accounting for this state of things. The covert itself—a mass of gorse—is contained within an old deer-park wall, very high, with a gate for ingress and egress. There is a good deal of tillage on the mountain side of the gorse, and the occupier of the land found the damage done by the incursions of light and heavy horsemen so great that I believe the idea was entertained of cutting down the gorse and abandoning the stronghold. A compromise, however, seems to have been effected, the result of which was that, while the pack were carefully exploring the furzy recesses within the walls, we were drawn up in a body outside in a bit of plough with a single outlet for the large mass. The fog is very persistent, lifting for a moment, then dropping the curtain again, and figures at many yards off loom large and indistinct, while the horizon is bounded by a single field. But a whimper, swelling into a chorus, is heard by some, and a rush is made to the outlet in the park-wall which leads into Dr. Evory Kennedy's lawn. Over this we gallop, jumping over another small wall; then a short check on the Dublin road lets up the fuglemen, after which the pack stream away at great pace, never stopping, till in a field by the Green Hills and Timmins Castle the fox either gets to ground or baffles them somehow, for the fact I never ascertained. However, this was the conclusion of a very short gallop, seen well by a minority, among whom were Captain R. Mansfield, the Hon. E. Lawless, Mr. Ellis, the Messrs. Blacker, General Irwin, and others. The distance was short; but fences were greasy, and the land was far from light, consequently grief was not unfrequent; and a runaway horse that landed its owner in a pit very nearly made the burden of sorrow serious, but I believe neither suffered very severely from the catastrophe.

Castle Bagot, the next draw, proved empty; so we trotted on to some wild gorse patches near the twelfth lock on the Grand Canal; but they were in the same category of blankness; and, turning westward, we trotted on along the canal banks for a couple of miles till we reached a secluded little gorse, very young but very

thick, which was made in Sir Edward Kennedy's presidency by the landlady, Miss Gould, and known as Miss Gould's Gorse. It is a very angular, wedgy bit of covert, but foxes seem to love its silence and its isolation; and here we found very soon indeed, and in five minutes more we are stampeding along a lane, off which we turn over a steep bank into some grass fields, where hounds race away, and horses are stretched to keep at all anigh them. Westmanstown is crossed, and the line leads into the verge of Castle Bagot Land, where the hounds roll over their quarry, who never got a chance after an extremely quick burst, scent proving most serving and sustained. A third run, terminated by night, began at Johnstown Kennedy and ended at Saggart. I forgot to say that about one o'clock the atmosphere, though heavy all day, shook off the fog clouds.

This pack had a very good gallop last Thursday (one of the wettest days we have had so far in the season), from Knockrigg Gorse, by Golden Fort, across the river Slaney to ground at Ballycrow; it was described to me as very fast indeed, fairly straight, but not well seen throughout by the field, the country being far from easy or pleasant to cross.

Yesterday (Friday) was saddened by the accident which befell Mr. French, of Ardsallagh, from a kicking horse; the victim to-day was a fine hunter of Captain Wardrop's, kicked severely in the near fore-arm; but really the escapes are more surprising, perhaps, than the accidents from this cause. On the self-same Friday (and nearly at the same hour, by a strange coincidence) that a kicker smashed poor Mr. French's leg, Mr. Filgate, in Louth, lost "Advocate," one of his best hounds, by a kick from a lady's horse, who had already gained an evil *renommé* for doing mischief (the horse *bien entendu*, of course).

Want of space prevented my doing justice to Mr. Filgate's week in Louth in my last budget. Let me now repair the omission very briefly. On Tuesday the meet was to have been Clermont, but the weather was so bad no one came, so the

hounds, after waiting till 12.30, returned to kennel. On Friday they were at Beaulieu, when they found at once, and ran a fox to ground; a second ran a ring, and was killed in finishing it. A third turned up in the same covert, and ran well by Beltrick barn and Ballydonnel, round Newtown demesne, and was rolled over after forty-five minutes. Newtown Gorse held another, who got to ground very quickly. Blackhall produced a real good fox, who, after standing up for one hour and forty minutes and telling out the field, was rolled over; some four, including the master and men, alone witnessed the end. This part of the country had been very short of foxes for some time, and it was very cheering to Mr. Filgate to see so goodly a show there to-day.

On Saturday, the 18th, while the fashion-led crowds followed the Kildare hounds as near as they could, a select party of the Ward Union men had one of their best thirty-five minutes towards Garristown, and fifteen more in view, fast as the fastest could wish for; nor were they incommoded by fog in the least—a thin rain seems to have taken its place.

Sir David Roche's run on the 17th, to which I just alluded in my last, is so *hors ligne* that I must recur to it, if only in outline. The pack met at Fort William, and found in Ballingarry Gorse, which lies on a hill, where the thin soil hardly held any scent at all; so, instead of hunting, the hounds dragged slowly after their fox as far as Mount Brown; here a change came o'er the spirit of their waking dreams. A countryman informs Sir David that the fox has just crossed the road, so he holds on the bitches without the loss of an instant, and now the valley lay smiling before them, and with the valley a fresh impetus to scent. Russ Wood spreads out before them, and all goes well till a cur dog comes on the scene, courses the fox, and occasions a check by a farmhouse. Sir David now holds them on over some water meadows, hits off the line happily, and never a pause or dwell breaks the continuity of the gallop till this gallant fox is rolled over on the dressed ground in front of Adare Manor, Lord

Dunraven's park. The distance is estimated at eleven miles; the pace was very good. The line led over the cream of Limerick. Form your estimate of the gallop, gentle reader, if you have any local or topographical knowledge to assist your imagination.

The heavy rain which robbed Mr. Filgate of a field last Tuesday was also felt in Galway, though perhaps in a lesser degree. The county pack met at Derrahiney, the residence of Colonel Featherstonhaugh, a true lover and supporter of all sport in which horses are chief actors, or, at any rate, important accessories. Foxes abounded in the home circuit; one was sent to ground after one hour and twenty minutes; then Longford was visited, and with such success that for two hours one good fox defied his enemies, who were hard at him with rare scent for forty minutes. Night stopped the chase.

On Monday, the 20th, the hunting programme for those "within the pale" consisted mainly of a brace of items—the Kildare hounds at Ballymore Eustace; the Ward Union pack at Dunboyne—*utrum horum mavis accipe*, ardent or lukewarm pursuer! There will be sport at both, take my word for it (am I not a prophet after the events?). Lots of good company, lots of coffee-housing, any amount of fencing, and some galloping with both. If your stud is a large one, and recruited from various hunting grounds in Ireland, and you are wavering in your choice, let the stud groom decide the question. "The Meteor" you knew pulled your arms off on Saturday, tried to fly everything, and shrivelled your heart within you to the size of a dried pea, as he just did the few ragged banks you encountered with a slight kick back. Well, the pastures round Dunboyne are wide enough for a runaway. There are plenty of brooks and singles, and the chances are he will come to your hand charmingly when *he* has had his innings for the first mile. Be it Dunboyne, then; the county is very holding and water sodden, but two days of fine weather have improved the going marvellously.

The hour is 1.15; the day beautiful for an outcome of

November, and bright withal. The scene is at Dunboyne, a village with a history, but which at present consists of a few score of houses, mostly hovels, which are ranged in the form of an incomplete triangle, conspicuous among which are one or two tidy "pubs," where the yards are good, the provender sweet, and the landlords or ladies most anxious to do their best for the hunters which the central situation consigns to their tender mercies. I said Dunboyne had a past. In the time of Henry VI. it boasted a provost, and some men-at-arms; but the lava wave of 1798 swept it with its fiery besom, and after that—*fuit* Dunboyne. It is said to have been a sort of Luton to Dublin; but, looking at the straw thatch on the aforesaid hovels, and the general wretchedness of aspect of the place, I cannot think that any trade or manufacture flourishes greatly in its vicinity.

To-day the sun gleams brightly upon ten or fifteen pinks, while about a couple of score of more sadly clad pursuers and a couple of habits make up the array of stag-hunters. Turning through a sort of excrescence of the triangle, we are presently trotting past Wood Park, till after a brace of miles or more are covered, we begin to wonder where the deer has received his or her liberty. Presently we are relieved from our suspense, for the hounds take up the running briskly as we pass Vesington, Mr. Trevor Hamilton's residence, and the initial rhene is got over safely by all save a heavy man on a cobby chestnut, who comes on his head from the steam not having been accommodated to the freight. An up-bank, another single, and then follows a long check. The quarry don't see the fun of making sport for the Philistines, and she makes way for No. 2—the doe of Enfield, who, enlarged at Culmullen last season, ran fast and well past Larch Hill and past Cappagh till she finished at the well-known station and village, giving her followers more than twenty miles of road work home that night. To-day she bounded first over the Batterstown pastures, ran the Ten-mile Bush Farm, then brushed past the Poor-House Gorse on her way to Lagore,

threaded the mazes of Mr. Thunder's park, swept past Reisk Gorse to Kilbrew, where the Meath hounds were so busy a few days ago, and was taken by Primatestown, not quite half a dozen witnessing the capture, out of a well-mounted hard-riding field, of light weights for the most part, among them Captain Candy, Lord Langford, and Lord F. Lennox. Of the number of stayers there was Mr. Trotter, who, with Jem Brindley, seems almost inseparable from this pack. No one was drowned, though, I believe, the master subsided into eight feet of running water, and a curious recital might be made of many moving accidents by flood and field. I cannot give the time, but the pace to Lagore was fast, and the distance covered was considerable.

Meanwhile, Ballymore Eustace meet was well attended, and the first draw, Stonebrook (the residence of a *ci-devant* master of this pack and county member, now, we regret to say, in ill health), sent forth a gallant fox, who ran towards Dunstown Wood, by Mr. Maunder's lands, pointing for Silliott, but was headed, then turned into Harristown Park by Kelly's Wood, crossed the Liffey, and, holding his way along the far side bank, brushed through the Black Thorns, Geogheganstown, Ardenode, and Mullacash; then recrossed the Liffey and scratched himself into a burrow on the sandy soil of the Liffey bank, and almost, I hear, in view. A fine long hunting run, the first part diversified by much jumping, and, naturally, a few tumbling feats.

The grateful gorse patch (for 'tis no more) of Eadestown was next visited, and two foxes turned out of its shelter. Punchestown being up wind, the well-known scurry thither was not enacted to-day, the line being hillwards towards Elverstown, then inclining to the Downshire; then twisting to Lord Miltown's Park of Russboro'; then back towards the Downshire, when light began to wane, and the hounds were stopped. His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, with Captain Fitzgerald, who had been performing some military function at Naas Depôt, joined the pack at Eadestown.

On Tuesday, the 21st, the Meath hounds met at Drumree station—classic ground for the followers of the Ward Union fortunes, as well as those of Meath, for 'tis the portal to a charming line of country, and good gorses dot it at very convenient intervals. Little wonder, then, if the meet was a very full one, and that Dublin mustered strong on the occasion, seeing *tujours cerf*, like *toujours perdrix*, may become tedious and monotonous—a very surfeit of good things. Kildare, too, was represented by Mr. Percy La Touche, Mr. Blacker, and one or two more hard-riding sportsmen, while among the strangers were Captain Trench Nugent (late master of the Staffordshire), Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Lord Francis Lennox (a visitor from the King's County, who seemed particularly well mounted on a very thick bay horse), Mr. Morrogh (on a very clever Wexford horse); and I fancy the list would include a few more. The morning had been hazy and inclined to fog, and the Dublin and Wicklow range loomed large and indistinct as one rode to the trysting point. By eleven o'clock the sky was clear and the sun very bright, and everything was at its best. Culmullen, the property of Mr. Kearney, and occupied last season by poor Captain Montgomery, was the first point of investigation. The covert is principally contained in a wedgy-shaped bit of wood in front of the lawn, and from it two foxes issued, without much delay, considering that this day was probably their first hunting experience; one ran by the back of Culmullen House, and was seen by the entire field loping across a wide pasture field towards Warrenstown. Whether headed or not, or only frightened, when in mid career he turned right back as if bound for Beltrasna Gorse, crossed a lane, down which a couple of pursuers were riding very leisurely, and they then got a start, which, if scent had been at all availing, would have given them the best of the early part of the run at any rate; but scent did not serve a bit, and in twenty or twenty-five minutes more the fox had to be given up.

The word Beltrasna now caught the ear, and many heard it

with joy, for no fairer gorse, or one with better surroundings, ever harboured a flying fox. I don't know why we were taken a couple of miles round by muddy lanes to it, as my memory is of a pleasant canter thither, over eight or ten grass fields. A rustic told me of "wars," by which I gathered some farmer had a prejudice against horses on his land. Let us hope that as Turkey has joined the Conference, or consented to a Conference, our friend, too, may listen to the tender suasion of the great powers of hunting. Beltrasna Gorse is quivering with music, a fox emerges pointing for Mulhussey; he is headed back and devoured. A second is on foot—impetuous men, Lords and Commons, jump over one or two fences popularly supposed to be boundaries. In vain the master tries to stem the torrent. The whole thing is suicidal; scent is low, hounds have to stoop for it, their heads have been got up, and hence these tears. But the fox breaks at last; it may be he will take us on to Pratt's Gorse; two fields, three fields, and it is all over. To ground in a bank seems the conclusion, though Goodall cast and cast away in vain. Kilcarty is another word of good omen. Our way thither lies over a splendid bit of schooling ground, which it takes a hunter to cross; and this bit of the day was really very lively, and some of the fencing was very meritorious. The Grange, Mr. Murphy's residence, is next reached, and those who at this stage felt the pangs of hunger and thirst found an admirable system of in-door relief well administered here. We were now on our road to Kilcarty Gorse, one of the most celebrated in Meath, but it did *not* hold to-day, and the evening hours were occupied in dragging slowly after a straight, bold fox, who jumped up from the Hill of Glane, passed through Dunsany without dwelling or hanging about its inviting woodlands, having also passed through Swainstown equally sharply, then held on for Tara, and was given up at Rigglestown, not far from Lismullen, where I think he was marked to ground. A fine line, and containing material for a splendid run had scent been in the ascendant at all.

Those who selected Sallins (the Kildare meeting-point) in preference to Drumree, had by odds the best of it to-day, as the following outline will show. Osbertown Gorse, equi-distant from Sallins and Naas, was the first covert visited, and its size and thickness made it very hard to disturb a fox. When he *was* ejected he ran for a few fields to the Liffey, and crossed its waters at Carragh Bridge, and was run into at, or rather near, Yeomanstown House. Some wild gorse on the land of Gingerstown, which is not regularly enclosed or formed into a covert, but which has recently been much haunted by foxes, was next run through, and from it issued a good wild fox, who, starting at score, led the field at great pace for some twenty-five minutes, till he was fain to take shelter in the ruins of the conservatories of Donore, a fine pile erected by the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, De Burgh. Landenstown did not hold; so a move was made to Bella Villa, another huge gorse, and from it a fox was ejected, not without the expenditure of much time and patience. His course lay through Longtown demesne land, across the commons of Lockanure, through Ballinagapha, over the Betaghstown road, through Mount Armstrong Covert, into the willow bed at Donadea, where, owing to the lateness of the hour, pursuit was abandoned. A reference to the map will show how straight the fox ran. From point to point the distance exceeds six miles.

On Wednesday the foxes in Kildare and Meath had the benefit of a brief armistice; while the stag was enlarged for the benefit of the Philistines, who mustered in fair force at the Black Bull. Three rainless days had done much for the going of this flat country, and the swollen brooks had become contracted to their normal bounds. Trotting along that now familiar road towards the Fairy House for a mile or two, the hounds were put on in a field which I fancy made part of the old racecourse, and the head they carried showed at once that scent was warm to-day. Men, too, seemed very full of ride and jump, for the first fence—a

brook covered over with a tangle of bush and briar—was not absolutely necessary to jump, but most went at it with a will, and, strange enough, all I think got over nicely. We are now by the farmhouse of Porterstown, and our deer turns sharp to the right, taking us over a succession of large fences, and a loose horse or two become visible in consequence. Across Batterstown and the terrible Ten-mile Bush Farm, and on to the Navan line; then a view, and the road crossed not far from the parsonage, the line leads on once more past the Fairy House, Harbourstown, past Ashbourne, and into darkness, the deer having fairly gained her, or his, liberty for the time being. After crossing the Batterstown road, and going for a mile or so, till peradventure you found that your hunter was lobbing along instead of galloping, and just doing the fences and no more (*experto crede*), perhaps it were well to pull up before the inevitable fall comes; and as there is no chance of catching the pack, for they are running up-wind, we may survey the scene from a hilly coign of vantage. Close by is a gallant officer, well known between the flags, emerging from a wet ditch, while several of the fields are decorated with the figure of a solitary horseman (not in a cloak, as G. P. R. James used to put him) who had found his *ultima Thule* either in the pasture or its boundary. The peculiar feature of this grand gallop was that the deer were changed, *on dit*, *twice*, but most probably only *once*, as two or three hounds, sticking to their original quarry, hunted one deer by the village of Dunshaughlin, while the main body hunted a fresh one that started off in front of them as they were passing by the Fairy House. *Finis coronat opus*, and I hear there was no finish to this chase to decide the vexed questions of who rode straightest, who stayed longest, whose horse was freshest coming home. Some were caught as in a trap in that celebrated Ten-mile Bush Farm; some were not on their brook jumpers; some nicked in. But, as the Laureate tells us, "We're all of us tailors in turn;" and no horse could be condemned for not living the entire distance at the great pace if his

burden exceeded 12st. Among those whom I heard of as going very well was Mr. Hartigan, of the 3rd Dragoon Guards.

The fact of changing deer must not lead any ingenious youth to fancy deer are *ferœ naturœ* in Ireland. There are a few still in the south and west, but in the shires they are not found, and the Celtic deer-hound is mostly seen on memorial brasses, tablets, ancient sculptures, or their revivals on canvas. These deer were of the Ashbourne Park, and having on different occasions baffled the pack while light lasted, they had thus roamed about in freedom ever since.

On Thursday the scene shifts to the woodlands of Somerville (Lord Athlumley's extensive park), where wood and water and undulating grounds crowned by a handsome modern house made a fair framework for the hunting scenes enacted here to-day:

> "Si canimus sylvas sylvæ sint consule dignæ;"
>
> "We'll sing the woods—if they but hold
> A stout old fox, straight-neck'd and bold;"

nor was such a *dramatis personœ* wanting to-day, as the result will show. The forenoon was dark, and lowering, and cold. Tons of snow, sleet, or rain seemed about to fall on the earth; but a ten-knot breeze from the east swept over the earth, and kept off the shower or snow bath for some hours. Meanwhile the roads were dry and crisp, the going good, if just a little sticky and holding, and the surrounding landscape—surveying it in a hunting point of view—was, so far as the aforesaid leaden clouds permitted, a survey of the most inviting character and aspect. After leaving Batterstown, Drumree, and Kilmessan, Meath wears a somewhat altered face. Perhaps the pastures are not so vividly green, the grass so rich or succulent, but on the other hand, wider expanses of wild country meet the eye. Hills such as Screen, Tara, Kilbrew, and Kilmoon diversify the rolling plains of grass, while rivers of rapider current drain the lands and keep water wheels busy.

The meet is an enormous one. I did not count the carriages, but their number was great, and all seemed full! In the words of Ireland's poet *par excellence*—Moore—it was a case of

"To ladies' eyes a round, boys! we can't refuse, we can't refuse!
When bright eyes so abound, boys, 'tis hard to choose, 'tis hard to choose."

I will be more discreet than Paris, for I will not hand the apple to any one, and will soberly say (mindful of your columns) that the scene was of the gayest and fairest; but for nearly an hour His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, who, I think, had nearly as much to do with the array of beauty as fox-hunting and fine scenery, did not show on the scene, for he had railed as far as Drumree Station, and hacked on for the rest of the journey, as the train was late. But wildfowl are glancing about in hundreds, the hounds are rattling the large woods, men are galloping about in all directions. At last, and after much bullying, our fox emerges into the open, crossing the road by the Kingston National School-house. The hounds carry a fine head, but in half a mile he is back again, and safely ensconced in a drain near the house. This half mile, with one or two large water jumps, has given wet compresses to more than one pursuer, amongst others to Captain Maurice Fitzgerald, the Duke's equerry, whose good-looking four-year-old has jumped just a little bit short (the Royal party have now joined the cavalcade). There is a pause near the Somerville stables, while the hounds are enacting the part of sewerage inspectors; carriages and horsemen and all now for a short space stand at ease. Did time permit, I would endeavour to depict the scene and its chief elements. For two prominent figures in the array I must crave a line or two of room, or rather room for a line or two. Colonel C. Fraser, V.C., spite of a very recently broken collar-bone, has not invalided, and his phaeton, his chestnuts, and his own Thibetian costume of camel or goat's hair stand out very prominently. The other very noticeable man is the Squire of Bellinter, Mr. J. J. Preston, mounted on

a grand grey horse that any Arab sheik of the desert might envy (he is—rare thing—a strikingly handsome charger, and yet a *perfect* hunter), wearing the uniform of his own hunt, red and green collar. By the way, his harriers had two exceptionally straight and good gallops yesterday, killing their first hare, and whipping off from the second at dusk.

I must now dismiss this part of the subject with the observation that Somerville probably never saw so large and fashionable a meet; that Louth was there in great force, Kildare, Galway, Dublin, and Westmeath being not unrepresented, while among the visitors from your side of the ditch were Captain Candy, Captain Trench Nugent, and Lord F. Lennox. Having lost our first fox, we are now looking for a second in Walshe's Gorse, a fine stronghold, flanked by a fir plantation. Not till the remotest corner was gained did I hear a whimper. *Then* the jam! the gates! the scurrying! I see on my right Mr. Rothwell, on a clever old grey, charging a large quickset hedge to get clear from the crowd, and successfully. We are now on the edge of a brook, and near a mill—the hounds to our right, in a plantation; presently they emerge, we cross a small fence, and then for about a couple of miles or less the pack race across green fields, divided by some three or four fences only, till we are opposite a picturesque castellated old house, the property of Mr. De Gernon, to whose careful preservation, I hear, fox-hunting in this neighbourhood is much indebted. A small spinney, with a well-known earth, runs from it, with brooks all round apparently, and no escape if we mean to pursue. Through it the hounds stream, and again we are galloping best pace over lands which remind me strongly of the Severn Valley, near Thornbury. Mr. Kearsley is leading us; an embankment shuts out a brook in our path; his horse, a very hunting-like chestnut, has to do it at a stand, and just gets over with a scramble. Lord Clanmorris has it next, and, putting on lots of steam, lands well in the next field. Mr. Hone, Mr. Chadwick, and Mr. Tiernan's horses jumped it beautifully, although it

was nothing when once you were over; but we are galloping on again; a flock of sheep foil us much in two fields more. It is a cold drag by Bessborough, where I hear our fox got to ground: all clue is gone. Slator's Gorse, a couple of miles distant, surrounded by grand reaches of wild grass land, is worth the journey to see. It held a fox, but its tenant got chopped—our hopes dashed. Of the remainder of the day I cannot speak from observation, as my hunter had to carry me many a mile homewards. Miss Gradwell's grey cob was jumping beautifully all through; and no one seemed to enjoy hunting more than Miss Smith on a neat grey pony.

I hear the Tipperary hounds had a good hunting run on the 21st, when they met at Rochestown, and had a ring from Ardfinnan Castle to begin with, followed by a quick find in Kilmalogue, a sharp scurry over Logher pastures, across the Clonmell road, and into the lands of Magnistown. Three ladies led the way all through, I hear; no bank too high, too furzy, or too trappy for their light hands and clever hunters.

P.S.—Having trenched already, I fear, on your columnar space, I regret that I can only treat, or illtreat, some splendid sport—the outcome of the last ten days or so—in a succinct and epitomising style.

Thus, on Thursday the Kildare hounds met at Narraghmore Court House, and began very well with a fox from the neighbouring wood, who was heading for Martinstown, till a long check in a bit of plough marred it. Turning to Nine-tree Hill, where foxes seemed to abound, one was hunted *viâ* Crookstown to a point between Morne and Ballitore. From Spratstown Gorse a fox took them to the Monte Diavolo, through Ballynure, and back to the same hill of Shitan.

On Saturday, from Cullen's Gorse, a fine stout fox took them *viâ* Windgate Hill to Lara, thence to Courtown, Taghadoe, Rathcoffey, and Irishtown; the first thirty minutes very fast and good,

as we learnt from the only three men who saw the run fairly well—the Baron de Robeck, Mr. Chapman, and the Hon. Major Lawless; the field an *enormous* one.

Of the earlier events on the 23rd in Meath I have given your readers a sketch. Having a long distance to ride home, I left them at Slator's Gorse eating the third fox of the day. Another was unfortunately chopped there; the third from this splendid gorse succumbed in the open after a fair gallop through Somerville, and thence towards Corballis.

On the 24th they had runs, but nothing noteworthy, from Faughanhill Gorse, from Allenstown, and a third from Gilltown into Drewstown; and on Saturday, the 25th, they had a straight eight-mile run (as measured on the map from point to point) from Rosmead into Killua, thence to Miltown, and by Belgeith into Balrath, where their fox got to ground; one hour and ten minutes. In Wexford, where Mr. Beatty, the master, so long and successfully held the horn, but at length resigned it at the beginning of this season, the sport has been fair, foxes plentiful, but as yet nothing of great brilliancy has occurred. A good thirty minutes from Courtnacuddy Plantations over Moneybore Hill, by Scobie to the Bridge of Kiltrea, where the dog pack pulled down their quarry, was perhaps the best of recent things.

In Kilkenny Colonel Chaplin has had rare good scent to hunt the proverbially stout foxes of his territory. Forty-five minutes from Summerhill on Monday last, to Mr. Bryant's Gorse. (A capital ball at the Athenæum in the evening.)

On Wednesday a good fox from Kiltornan ran two wide rings very fast, and, after standing up for two hours and thirty-five minutes, his life was spared at the intercession of the field. A visitor, Mr. Hamilton Stubber, master of the Queen's County hounds, and Major Bunbury, were in the front rank all through.

On Friday, finding in "The Rock," they ran to Woodsgift, on to Tallyho (this savours of the Pytchley country), towards Killeen,

and ended in semi-darkness at Knockloe; Shiner, the winner of the Kildare red-coat race, carrying the master to perfection.

I referred to Mr. Filgate's ill-luck in losing Advocate by a kick from a lady's horse last week. This week Duster, a third-season hound—the oracle of the pack—was ridden over and killed. A ring of fifty minutes from Mallabone, and a good thirty minutes from Stephenstown into Dundalk, were the best things of the week in Louth, to which I must refer in my next.

On Monday, the 27th, the Meath hounds visited the neighbourhood of the metropolis (Dublin), and the metropolis showed its appreciation of the honour by turning out *en masse* to see them. The day was clear, dry, and bright. The opening scene at Abbotstown, the residence of one of the members for the county Dublin, Mr. Ion Trant-Hamilton, was picturesque and brilliant in the extreme; while "society" made a point of putting in an appearance and attending the improvised farewell *levée* and drawing-room (for really it was nothing less) of his grace the Duke of Abercorn, who, as everybody knows and everybody regrets, is relinquishing the Viceroyalty of Ireland, an office which is apt to sink and rise in popular estimation according to the personal character and dignity of its occupant. Needless to say here that in his grace's hands the Court of Dublin suffered no diminution in splendour or prestige, or that the sword of state was right worthily and majestically borne. His grace did not hunt, save vicariously; his son, Lord Ernest Hamilton, having entered very well to hounds, and his staff being among the hardest of the hard. Lady Georgina Hamilton attended the meet near Dublin, and was out to-day, piloted by Colonel Forster, master of the horse. As a cricketer and rifleman the duke's name is well known to readers of *The Field*. A capital ring in the evening from Kilrue Gorse was the most noticeable thing in the day's proceedings, to which I shall allude again.

VIII.

"There lived—I do not deal in dates—
A champion of the heavy-weights,
Who o'er Kildare and Meath has done
Great things, in spite of sixteen stone."

Mr. Chapman and the run from Cullen's Gorse—Abbotstown—Cork and Limerick—Kilteel and "Snow-Storm."

By one of those ingenious fictions which, perhaps, owe their origin to the fact of the framers of our systems of law and divinity having been casuists of the first force, a bishop is supposed to say *nolo episcopari*, or words to that effect, before he is inducted to his see. Fancy a hard-working man, with a large family, who has known and tasted for years the pleasures of parochialism and poverty, while the parent tree has been absolutely weighed down by the number of fruit-bearing branches—fancy such a man, full of brains, full of organization, full of ambition, saying with real intent *nolo episcopari*. The office of master of a crack pack of subscription hounds, in these censorious and extravagant days, is open to far more hesitation and doubt. The vista of difficulties, diplomatic imbroglios, social pit-falls, failures imminent from a thousand unforeseen chances; the utter impossibility of pleasing the ever-contending factions of *laudatores temporis acti* and the rash innovators of the fast-galloping school; the unjust criticism which perverts prudence into cowardice, discretion into want of zeal, Fabian tactics into hesitating imbecility—all these Scyllas and Charybdises, and a thousand more too numerous to write

down here, are enough, in the language of the poet, to appal the bad, afflict the best. *Nolo esse* M.F.H. is the true burden of most men whose birth, means, and county position would entitle them naturally to aspire to the dubious honour, if they have been behind the scenes, and learnt something of the hard work, energy, tact, and brains (and even this combination is powerless against ill-luck) which a tolerably successful mastership involves. Fortunately for fox-hunting, Curtii are found ready to leap in full armour into the yawning gulf. The labour we delight in physics pain. The position has so many attractions to countervail the crop of anxiety, worry, and grumblings which each season germinates, that in England or Ireland a pack of fox-hounds rarely remains masterless for any length of time. The words of that old sea song—

> "How proud must be our Admiral, though he is pale to-day,
> Of twice five hundred iron men who all his nod obey"—

keep dinning themselves into my memory when I think of the power and dominion wielded by an M.F.H., his social influence, his autocracy in all matters connected with the county sport, his hegemony among the legions of the rank and file of men whom hunting enlists as its ministers and acolytes. The glamour of the position is great, and the halo which encircles venatic successes is lit up with prismatic brilliancy.

These reflections are suggested by the fact that at the end of the present season Kildare will be masterless. What I announced as a rumour has ripened into fact. Mr. Mansfield is not a Quaker, but his yea is yea, and his nay nay, and he has said the latter with emphasis and decision. When Sir Edward Kennedy (to whose presidency Kildare is immensely indebted, in the kennel department especially) resigned the horn some seasons ago, the county was masterless, kennelless, and, so far as hunting went, homeless. Backed by the unanimous support of the members of the hunt, Mr. Mansfield has organized the

commencement of a permanent, not a peripatetic system, changing with each master—permanent kennels near Naas, with houses for the staff, to which stables will, I believe, be very soon added. His dictatorship has been eminently successful, and general regret is felt that he should give up a position which he has filled very ably and satisfactorily. I recollect writing, when the office was in commission so to speak, that I was reminded of the imperial succession as depicted in Tacitus's terse and graphic language, that one, perhaps more than one, of the aspirants to the honour was *avidus sed impar*, another *capax sed aspernans*. It cannot be said of Mr. Mansfield, in the words of that historian, that universal consent would have proclaimed him the fittest man for the post had he never actually filled it, for he has filled it, and public opinion is justified.

One of his great successes dates from Saturday, the 25th, to which I could only allude cursorily in my last letter, from the want of time and space at command. The Kildare hounds met at the Hazelhatch and Celbridge station of the Great Southern and Western Railway. Now a certain amount of uncertainty hung about this meet in the minds of men. The station is a mile or so from the town of Celbridge, and precedent generally brings the pack into the main street of Celbridge from the station. Many came to the tryst from afar—from Meath, Westmeath, and its confines, for instance; and though a mile there and back is not much for a hunter, yet no one wishes to add this distance to the sum total of what may be a very long day even in mileage. It was very possible, if not probable, that Mr. Mansfield would cross the line and try some of the trans-rail coverts, such for instance as Boston, Cullens Wood, and Pigeon Hill; so most people did the right thing, and went to the meet instead of awaiting the pack at Celbridge. A drizzling, heavy, overcast day, inclined to fog, it was not an inviting atmosphere for the butterfly element, nor were carriages in such great force as I have seen them. On the other hand, Mr. and Mrs. Adair had come all the

way from the Queen's County. The Ladies Fitzgerald and Lady Annette La Touche were riding, and so were Mrs. Langrishe, Mrs. Morris, and a few more. His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught honoured the meet, attended by his equerry, Captain Maurice Fitzgerald (on a confidential roan from Mr. Kearsley's school). Mr. A. Macniel, Captain Tuthill, Mr. Chapman, and a few more represented Meath; Colonel Forster and the officers of the 3rd Dragoon Guards and Inniskillings came from Dublin; while of the absentees for the earlier part of the season, the most conspicuous (and not the least warmly welcomed) was the Earl of Clonmell, on his old favourite, Tipperary Boy, with the shapely Courtown for second horse. Mr. Mansfield soon resolved our doubts by the *mot d'ordre* "Cullen's Gorse." This set the cavalcade trotting on for a couple of miles, till the riders, some 200 strong, were jammed into a laneway with only one apparent exodus. The hounds are in the gorse in front of us; but almost before we can think of tightening girth or hardening heart, or abandoning an interesting conversation, the crowd is in motion, every one pressing to the corner gap. A scramble—a jump—and lucky those who emerged quickly. A few at the tail of the *queue* take a biggish fence, and thus get on fair terms with the leaders; for the majority a stern chase is inevitable. For five or six fields, with not more than three fences, it is racing pace, specially for the bad beginners. Then a road is reached, and the track is nearly identical with that of the last time the hounds drew the gorse (the Maynooth day), and we may not unwarrantably presume that we are hunting the very same fox we lost on that day. A few more fields bring us to the top of Windgate Hill, and then there is a pause of a few moments. Then the broad red and black line jumps out of a road; some are confronted by a bank, others by newish palings, which all do not get over very successfully. Two fields after this, the track brought one to a very wide ditch and bank, while in the best part of it a chestnut horse was engulfed, barring

progress—his owner, one of the hardest men in Kildare, standing over him in hopeless disappointment. Now this place was, I may say, the key to the whole position; four men charged it manfully—Major the Hon. E. Lawless, the Baron de Robeck, Mr. Chapman, and Mr. Blacker; the latter was the victim—the other three alone saw the cream of the run; and, of the trio, Mr. Chapman, who cannot be much under 16st., saw it at the nearest distance, for, sooth to say, the hounds had *much* the best of it. I should have stated, for the benefit of your general readers who do not know Kildare thoroughly, that the country we were riding over to-day is on the borders of Meath—rich pasture land like Meath, very flat, and fenced by deep and wide ditches, occasionally margined by a bank, and intersected by brooks and deep cuttings. The country is very featureless, one pasture much resembling another, one fence its predecessor. Hence, as the day was extremely hazy, nothing was easier than for those who were toiling behind fruitlessly, and attempted independent lines, to miss their way and come to hopeless grief. To return to the three—there is something mystical and magical in the number;—after jumping into a cross-road, their track lay past Taghadoe, with its ruined tower and church; past Lady Chapel, right across one of those huge cuttings I alluded to, and so on to Lara Covert. Here there was some little delay, though not sufficient to let up the field, and on the course lay between Kilcock and Courtown, the fox pointing as if he meant to seek his rest in Ballycaghan or Cappagh Gorses; presently, however, he turns to the left, and enters Courtown demesne lands, and here a view is gained. Mr. Chapman, up to Courtown, had gained first honours—*facile princeps*, and never was diploma of merit better earned; for, conceding something to luck in getting a start away from "the madding crowd," something to topographical knowledge, it is no small praise for such a heavy weight to have almost distanced an enormous field over a big line and land holding enough in places. At Courtown, I was told, though I vouch not for the authority, that foxes were

changed, and that a fresh fox led a small but considerably increased field (the tributary roads were now swelling the flood), once more by Lara, on by Dolloughstown, thence to Taghadoe, and so on by the swampy fields of Rathcoffey into Irishtown, and on to Major Barton's home farm, where scent died away; and as all now, whether they were with the hounds, or questing after them, or scurrying about the country for tidings of the missing pack, had had galloping and fencing enough in the two hours and fifteen minutes of this long pursuit, there was a general dispersion, to which I think the certainty of finding luncheon and everything that hungry hunter can desire at Straffan House, or Lodge Park contributed not a little. There was a great deal of grief in this run, but, fortunately, nothing of a very serious type, Captain Fitzgerald, the Duke of Connaught's equerry, getting as heavy a fall as most out. The first part of the race up to Lara was extremely fast and good, and the names I have mentioned were alone on fair terms with the flying pack. From Courtown there was some pretty hunting and large fencing, and in this part Captain Ward Bennett, Mr. Ellis, Mr. Macniel, and a few more were very well carried. The parallel between war and hunting is an old one, but in nothing perhaps is the analogy closer than in a thoroughly beaten and demoralised field devouring roads and fields in a *sauve qui peut* style—the majority armed with the most cogent reasons why they were not close to the leading hounds. Few coats were unsmirched; the Board of Works drain played havoc with the unities of pipeclay and French polish; but I think all went away with the conviction that they had "assisted," feebly or forcibly, at a "real good thing." The warm, muggy morning made scent all ablaze on those rich low pastures; but Jem Hill's axiom that a good *scenting* day is invariably a good *hearing* day was quite negatived on this occasion. The hounds ran anything but mutely, and yet they were almost inaudible a few fields off.

On Monday, the 27th, the original fixture for the Meath

hounds was Beau Park, the beautiful residence of Mr. Gustavus and Lady Fanny Lambert, on the river Boyne; but it was suddenly changed to Abbotstown, the park of Mr. Ion Trant Hamilton, M.P., a short distance to the northward of Dublin. The alteration involved some dislocation of hunting fixtures, but the Ward Union men proved that their edicts were neither Median nor Persian in their character, for they agreed to forego their assembly at the Flathouse to avoid the peril of clashing. I rather fancy, though I speak without inspiration or authority, that the change in these arrangements venatic was made to gratify a wish expressed by his grace the Duke of Abercorn, who was desirous of seeing a meet of the Meath hounds before he bade farewell to Dublin, its court, and its castle. Be that as it may, the gathering in front of Mr. Hamilton's comfortable mansion was not only exceptionally large, but eminently aristocratic, comprising as it did most of the notables who form the camp and court of Dublin. The hounds came by train, and did not appear in the court-yard till long past eleven o'clock, so that there was ample time, not only to take a leisurely survey of the splendid pageant, but also to gratify a more imperious and aggressive sense, provoked by a frosty morning and a long ride, in the dining-room of Abbotstown, which was hospitably thrown open by its owner to esurient pursuers. Among the early arrivals is the coach of the Inniskillings; soon follows his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught's phaeton, containing its owner and Captain M. Fitzgerald, apparently none the worse for Saturday's catastrophe. The Viceroyal carriage, with its team of brown horses and outriders, is always a goodly sight, and some half-dozen more carriages grouped around were good enough and well enough turned out even for Hyde Park of a June afternoon. Time would fail me to catalogue the tenants of smart Victorias, waggonettes, T carts, and modester Croydons. Let me dismiss the subject by remarking that the following comprised the Marquis and Marchioness of Drogheda, the Marchioness of Blandford,

the young Earl of Sunderland, Lady Georgina Hamilton, Lord and Lady Courtown, the Hon. Colonel Thesiger and his boy on a model hunter pony, the Hon. S. Maxwell, the Hon. Captain Rowley, and Lords Howth, Clanmorris, and Langford.

The woods of Abbotstown were drawn *pro formâ;* not that foxes don't harbour here, but no fox would hang long in their covert while carriages were grinding the gravel, and the hoofs of hundreds of horses were resonant all round. In Hollywood Rath demesne, no sooner were the pack put into the small belt of trees than two foxes emerged, one striding off to a gorse a short way off, while a second ran towards Abbotstown, with a few couple of hounds in pursuit. It was my fortune to follow his Royal Highness, who, mounted on his black horse, gave us a capital lead over a deep ditch and a small brook (where I've seen grief before now) in pursuit of this little lot, but we did not persevere, hoping the main body of the pack would come up. This they did not do. It seems the Ward River, rather in flood, arrested the tide of pursuit, and certainly the dauntless few who did cross it by wading or swimming justified a long pause, if not a full stop. Lord Clanmorris got over somehow, but the next man who emerged had to ride home without stirrups, and with a stone or two of water about his person.

Ballymacarny Gorse was the point of departure for several very good gallops last year. We found there, but could not force its tenant outwards; so, after running through Priestown Furze brake, we got on to Kilrue. Here the find was very quick, and the early stages of the run capital, till a check occurred not far from Ashbourne. The line, which seemed to be leading on towards Sutherland, now turns to the left, and hounds are again running hard back towards Kilrue, then through it and in the direction of Balfestown, with an inclination back to Kilrue—a figure of 8 almost—when the pack and very diminished field, who had been going *au clair de la lune*, had to be stopped, seeing that the hounds had to get back to Dunboyne station to catch their train home-

wards. Had the gallop finished a very few moments sooner, Captain Graves Sawle would not have had to mourn the loss of a very good hunter, who broke a hind leg at the close of the proceedings. There was much grief in this pursuit, but Captain Sawle's sad accident (for all must be saddened by the loss of a good hunter) was the only serious misadventure I heard of. Escapes from kicking were narrow; among others the Duke of Connaught was well-nigh a sufferer. A good move was made by a few men out, who warned others by literal devices not to come too near their kicking hunters—

> "I, pedes quo te rapiunt et auræ,
> I pede fausto."

The Meath programme at Philpotstown on the 28th was most attractive. The Duke of Connaught was sure to draw a gallant concourse of fair women and brave men. The country round is charming to the hunting ken! Why not Philpotstown? Can anyone give an absolute single reason for many of the minor moves he makes in the game of life, for the day's or hour's arrangements? Motives mingle and cross each other like the rays of light in perspective. I will not attempt to disentangle the skein. Whether it was love of change, the recent successes of the Kildare hounds, the facilities or difficulties in getting backwards or forwards, the hour of rising, or what influenced me, suffice it to say here that *Straffan* was my goal on Tuesday, the 28th—Straffan Bridge the fixture of the Kildare hounds; nor is any special reason or excuse necessary to assign for a visit to so fair a scene. The reach of the Liffey under Straffan House is one of the best bits of that winding stream, and on a calm morning Major Barton's handsome house is seen clearly mirrored in the pool below, perfect as in a photograph. A pleasant distance from Dublin by road or rail, accessible to the Queen's County and Meath, and surrounded by agreeable and hospitable country houses, Straffan Bridge is not only a pleasant and picturesque spot in itself, but 'tis also the

avenue to one of the best portions of Kildare's hunting grounds, either looking towards Maynooth or Sallins, while the parks near the bridge are not sufficiently wooded to induce a fox, if pushed about sharply, to dally long in their glades and pleasaunces. Riding home last night from the final gallop with the Meath hounds, a red-shot sky boded either frost or rain, or both in quick succession; the former prevailed during the watches of the night, and by 9 a.m. white rime overspread everything, the roads were hard as adamant, and thin ice was formed over all the surface waters. By noon the sun shone out pretty effectively, and, though it was freezing in the shade, mud was to be seen in the thoroughfares. Straffan Bridge is always thronged, nor was to-day an exception. It is a fixture much affected by ladies, and the hunting ladies were there almost to a woman—among them the Ladies Fitzgerald, the Hon. Mrs. Barton, Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Forbes, Mrs. and Miss Tuthill, Mrs. Langrishe, the Marchioness of Drogheda, Lady Annette La Touche, the Misses Finlay, Miss Kilbee, Mrs. Adair, and lots more besides; but of the names I have mentioned a few were driving, and not riding to-day. Among the visitors from neighbouring counties were Mr. Adair and Mr. Skeffington Smyth, Mr. Macneil, and one or two men from Meath. The Curragh and the Dublin Garrison swelled the assembly, which was certainly large, but withal very manageable.

The first bit of Straffan (an old gorse) drawn revealed nothing more than the fact that the fox had left it a short time before. The outskirts of Lodge Park did not even do so much as that. Castle Dillon Gorse, voted a certainty, failed us, as so many certainties do occasionally. Straffan Park remains, and hardly have we passed the house and shrubberies before the long line is in rapid motion, and we are galloping into a lane way, something in advance of those confoundedly slow hounds who *will* stick to their line! Here they come at last, not lifted to be sure, but hunting every yard of the ground. A little room is made for them, and then they go apparently for Rathcoffey—a good gallop

in prospect! The lane is choked. Mr. R. Kennedy takes one figure out of it by jumping his clever cob over a wide ditch. Two ladies and a man or two follow suit, but their effort to emerge is in vain. The hounds turn back and hunt on straight into the woods of Clongowes College, nearly a mile distant. Here, in a coney-burrowed bank, he took refuge, and, there being no extricator near in the shape of spade or terrier, he was left to his ill-earned rest, while the field—those at least whose lines were not cast in distant counties—crossed the Liffey in semi-Indian file by Major Barton's Suspension Bridge (a bugbear to young horses sometimes) on their way to Bishopscourt, where creature comforts as well as foxes were sure to be forthcoming. Alas for the demolition of aerial castles! There was no fox forthcoming at Bishopscourt (which is quite a phenomenon), and at the adjacent covert of Boston, Lord Cloncurry's—the *spes suprema* of the day—a fox was chopped.

Apropos of the text of the earlier portion of this letter—from which, like many other chroniclers, I diverged widely, led away by the fancies and ideas of the moment—I should state fairly, in referring to Mr. Mansfield's resignation of the Kildare mastership, that a portion of the Dublin press gave circulation recently to a most visionary and startling report that Mr. Mansfield's retirement was owing to a grave misunderstanding with an influential member of his hunt. Those who knew Mr. Mansfield well must be aware how extremely improbable such a contingency would be. Still, the report was circulated with the addition of circumstance, and, for aught I know, it may have travelled further than our insular limits. Let me here, then, state most positively, with authority—myself an uninfluential member of the hunt—that for once rumour had not even a colouring of truth; that no misunderstanding whatever has led Mr. Mansfield to take a step dictated solely by his personal wishes and convenience, for the simple reason that no misunderstanding whatever has arisen.

I have recently had to write short obituary notices of several

good hunters killed through hunting accidents. Captain Sawle's black horse yesterday was the recentest disaster. Mr. Cosby's ill-fortune in losing two valuable animals he was taking over with him to Pau—two out of eight—is even a more grievous mischance; for of the others may be said, as it was by the Grenadier of the old French Guard in answering for his comrades after action, "*Mort sur le champ de bataille.*" But Sampson, one of Sir Edward Kennedy's hunt horses originally, and reserved for his own use by Mr. Cosby, had none of the rapture of the strife; he was an exceptionally good hunter in any country, and his owner bought him in last May at Sewell's, when he was bid up to a very high figure. His performance in the Great Cullenagh run last year —if unsupported—would have stamped him as a high-class hunter.

Mr. Filgate, in the matter of hounds, seems one whom—

> "Unmerciful disaster
> Follows fast and follows faster"—

in the words (or something like them) of the bard. A lady's horse recently was unfortunate enough to kick and kill that good hound Advocate; on the 22nd he lost Duster (in the master's opinion the best hound he ever owned), ridden on and killed in a good ring from Mallabrone—a circumstance which probably saved this fox's life, as master and men stopped with their favourite in his death agony.

While the Kildare hounds were out of luck in their Straffan country, the Ward Unionists (if I may use a term which somehow seems suggestive of strikes and picketing) had a capital half-hour or more with a deer who ran over a considerable portion of the Fairy House racecourse—a line familiar to many of your readers, who, no doubt, would be glad to be riding in pursuit on that Easter Monday, when silk usurps the place of scarlet.

On Wednesday, the 29th, Lord Derby—a Knowsley red stag, of course—led them across part of the Ten-mile Bush Farm, and over the Rathregan Lock, which proved a barrier insuperable to

all but a gallant half-dozen. The line led on past Parsonstown Manor over Mr. Seery's grass lands, which are entered by a fine wide-topped double, thence across the rails of the Dublin and Meath line, till he was captured in an outhouse, on the lands of Pelletstown, I think—the riding division having crossed the metals by Killeston Bridge, which is not far from Drumree station. A second deer, a fallow of great reputation, was in the deer van, but somehow we missed the driver, or the driver missed us, though we went in quest of him as far as Dunshaughlin village. There were a few very smart horses out to-day, notably a chestnut son of Thomastown's—Tomboy, I think, by name, Lady Langrishe, and a nice brown mare ridden by Captain Colthurst—while a lady was charmingly carried by a grey that I recollect noticing with the Meath hounds some weeks ago.

I hear the Newbridge harriers have had very good sport lately; and on Monday they got off on capital terms with an outlying fox, whom they might have accounted for if he had not got into sanctuary—a fox covert, inviolate of course for harriers. The *on dit* is that his Royal Highness, who seems as fond of hunting progresses as was the Earl of Spencer in his viceroyalty, is about to see a new phase of fox-hunting in the south, the Duhallow country being destined for his first visit. Mr. Hare is, I am told, fortunate in finding plenty of foxes in his new territory, and scent enough to drive them along; but the United Hunt in Cork seem to be engrossing the lion's share of the good things "down south," as they say in America. Thus, on the 20th, when they met at Bally Edmund, Captain Smith Barry's glen supplied material for two hours' covert hunting, after which the pack got on to one at Temple Carriga, and sent him racing to Young Grove, beyond which he got to ground. On Wednesday, the 22nd, they had a capital run from Devonshire's Brake to Lenlara. On Friday, the 24th, they were at Mogeely, and the large field out included Lord Fermoy, the Hon. Miss Roche, Mr. R. N. P. Fitzgerald, etc. From the Strand Road Covert they took a fox without pause or

dwell to Cloyne Rocks, where he was safe from molestation—Miss Roche, I hear, in the very van of pursuit all through. A second fox turned up at Knockastrikeen, and was raced at top speed for some four miles, which disposed of the majority of the field, save Messrs. T. Coppinger, J. Murphy, and S. Bowles, who were in the front rank, as well as the huntsman. The Galway hounds have been stopped for a week, owing to the death of Mr. Robert French, of Monivea Castle; while Mr. Taaffe's death suspends the Roscommon stag-hounds on Thursday, on which date they were to have met at Strokestown.

The recent story of the Limerick hounds, some of whose brilliant passages I have alluded to at intervals in my weekly letters, is somewhat as follows: On the 17th ult. they met at Fort William, and the very limited number of red coats boded well for elbow room and sport. There seemed a good stock of foxes in Ballengarry Gorse, but the selected of the pack was a ringing brute, whose tactics were round and round the hill; so he was given up after an hour's hunting. A move was now made to Mount Brown, and just as the pack were entering the demesne they hit off the line of a fox who had evidently just gone away; so, feathering and examining the ground carefully, they at last settled down to him, racing him to the Ballingarry road towards Lisnemota; they then sent him at top speed over the water meadows, with Ballylin to the left, then brushing Ross Covert, they crossed the Kilfenny Road, passed the Glebe House at Derrytosna, surmounted Spierman's Hill, and entering Adair Manor by old Castle Robert Wood, they rolled their fox over in the open by the river banks, almost under the shadows of the ruined abbeys. Distance, nine miles, done under the hour. On the 20th they were at Inch St. Laurence, and found plenty of foxes in the gorse at Knockyon, and killed one of them without much sport. From Ballinagarde a fox stood up for two hours, and got to ground at last. Fedamore Gorse, which is well preserved by Captain Smith, supplied a third fox, who ran in rather a zig-zag

fashion till dark, when the pack were stopped at Grey Bridge. On the 24th they were at Rostemple, and found a good fox at Glenna, who went away gallantly to Castle Ivers ; thence he held on between Clorone Gorse and Isamore, with Tory Hill (not the Waterford mountain) in front, thence by the poor-house of Croom into Carass, brushed through the park, and was rolled over in the open at Castle Roberts after a grand gallop.

P.S.—The chief events in this very supplementary budget are a long desultory run in Kildare of nearly two hours' duration on the last day of November, ending in a kill not far from the starting point, Copelands Gorse. On the same day, which in the vicinity of the metropolis was clouded with a haze almost amounting to fog, Mr. Leonard Morrogh had the misfortune to break his leg by a fall from a youngish hunter he was trying while jumping that watery chasm known and dreaded as the Lock of the Bay. His many friends will be glad to learn that he is going on very well, though the bone was fractured in two places.

On Saturday the Ward Union men had nearly the largest assembly of their season so far at Priestown cross roads ; the first red stag, enlarged by Kilrue Gate, made two of the briefest excursions off the road, and then subsided into an outhouse ; the second stag was reserved for a *bonne bouche ;* but it certainly *was* a trial of patience trotting off seven miles or thereabouts at a latish hour to the distant Garristown Hill, where "London," one of their many truants this season, had been seen grazing peaceably this morning, and reported to Charley Brindley. After riding up the eastern slope of this great landmark, and just as we had topped it, away went the pack at score into the valley below, which a glance showed to be watered by many a brook and brooklet. The field divided into two sections, one keeping much to the right, the other to the left. The former had the best of it, I think. The Primatestown brook, however, confronted all, and all had to get over as best they could—or in and out. One or two more sullen,

sedgy brooks had to be got over, and here pursuit ceased in many a case I wot of—in one, at any rate, in which I had a strong personal interest. Curraha and Kilbrew are now left behind, and the chase speeds on to Somerville, or its borders, till night came on, and left the good deer London to roam about a pasture along with the countless herds of horned stock that graze these prairies till another, and let us hope *an earlier*, expedition is sent in quest of him.

On the same day the Kildare hounds met an average-sized field at Blackchurch, his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, riding his Lawyer horse, being one of the array. Johnstown Kennedy was the first place drawn—needless to say successfully ; but the fox, after running for about ten minutes, got to ground by Collierstown Hill. Dug out, he repeated his former tactics near the Woolpack Road, but with more success, as he remained *in statu*. The little hill of Kilteel was next visited. It has not been a holding covert for the last few seasons, perhaps because it was bled too freely before; but to-day it held one of its old traditionary foxes, who plunged down into the valley at once, nearing Arthurstown Gorse, which he did not enter, but wheeled sharp to the left, as if for Tinode and its wooded ravine ; he did not enter Tinode either, but made for Glending at once ; and here the first pause occurred, after a very sharp gallop of nearly eight miles, done in thirty-five minutes, the line forming something nearly an approach to the shape of the letter S. Only those who were happy in their start had a chance of seeing anything of the pack, or riding anything but a very fast and hopeless stern chase. Among the many who got off badly was his Royal Highness, but he never gave up persevering till the end (spite of a fall). Among those who were fortunate in securing front places early, and *keeping them*, was Mr. W. Blacker, on his cup winner, Snow-Storm. From Glending the hunting became somewhat of a potter on to near Elverstown, over Slieve Rue Hill, when the good fox got to ground. Arthurstown, drawn late, sent forth a fine fox, who got

to ground in Mr. Hendrick's lands at Newtown; but by this time there was, as I hear, hardly light to see the fences. By all accounts this was a magnificent day's sport; the line taken a regular old-fashioned one, such as turned-down foxes would hardly dare to enterprise.

On Friday last Sir David Roche had a first-class gallop from Fedamore Gorse, thirty-five minutes without pause, Mr. Amcotts, of the 5th Dragoons, unfortunately killing his hunter. The Duke of Connaught was unlucky in his visit to Meath last week, the best gorses of the county not holding on that particular occasion, while another covert drawn held too many for sport. Thirty-seven minutes of good pace from Farrenalcock Gorse on the 1st (the intervention of a river rather marred it for some pursuers) was about the best thing seen in Meath last week, though now I can only glance at it.

The Kildare hounds had a very fine gallop from Hatfield on the 4th, of which more anon.

IX.

"A bishop in Bond Street to guns was inclin'd ;
In coping this prelate relax'd his great mind."

A bishop *in partibus*—Stag hunting—Mr. Dundas on "Gazalier"—Bellinter harriers—Blue collars—Beltrasna Gorse—Limerick hounds.

THE casualties and misfortunes attributed, and perhaps not unfairly, to the unusual blindness of the country at this season, remind me of an anecdote which may possibly be new to some of my readers, forgotten by others, and so far half-new. There was a bishop in Ireland, not quite a hundred years ago, who combined with his episcopal functions a nice and discriminating taste in horseflesh. He dearly loved a horse, but what he loved even more was selling the object of his fond affection—no doubt with the laudable and philanthropic view of benefiting his laic and secular brother. The bishop owned a very fine young animal, who seemed endowed with every qualification that hunter of high class should be gifted withal, save that accident or misfortune had robbed him of an eye. Hearing that an English dealer, who had not been unknown at Market Harborough, had settled in Dublin, and was giving long prices for young fresh hunters of quality and substance, he wrote him a glowing picture of his colt, and, without mentioning price, asked him if he thought such a paragon could fail to make a hunter, even single-eyed as he was. The dealer's reply was laconic, and not encouraging ; it ran somewhat thus : "My lord, in a long experience with hunters, I have invariably

found that they require two good eyes in their head and one in their tail, if that were possible." I think the professional dealer had the pull of his amateur brother coper on this occasion, though most men of any experience can recollect an odd one-eyed hunter of good character for performance, though more steadiness and watchfulness were required to save the rider from occasional accident.

"On Monday," says the old ballad of Chevy Chase, if I remember aright, "they began to hunt when daylight did appear." The little party I refer to did nothing of the kind; but they resembled their forebears in two things—first, in that they hunted the stag; secondly, in that they did so on Monday; all other conditions were widely different. Instead of "daylight," read "after lunch," and so on; the points of difference being widely in excess of those of resemblance. The party I wish to introduce to your readers was a very small group of Ward Union men at the Kilrue Gate on the 4th inst., to which number you may add as accessories, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, whom the Wild Irishman and the Holyhead steamer had only injected into Ireland a few hours before; just enough space for hot bath, a breakfast, and a rapid scurry to the meet in one of Dublin's fast "outsiders." The quarry of the day was a red stag, and the scene of his enlargement was a pasture field at Mullinam. From here he bounded forth, apparently full of "go," and ran an incomplete ring by Mr. Reid's farm to the fence of the Ratoath Road, which he did not cross, but turned leftwards towards Fairy House. Here the pace, which had been rather slow, quickened a bit as the line led over this famous racecourse, past its ghastly white empty stand, over the entrance road, and on towards Lagore, till, after a pleasant run in the form of a loop, the muckle beastie was safely captured not far from Ratoath; and as the diurnal rain—which had ceased for a few hours and given the sun a few moments to dart forth feeble rays, and the birds some respite from the watery dispensation in which they busied themselves in preening their wet plum-

age—began to descend again unintermittingly, I think a general dispersion took place. It was a pleasant run enough, over beautiful country, but so holding and water-sodden withal that every mile was equal to two of ordinary travelling, and the heavy going, added to the greasiness of the banks, made falls as thick as blackberries in October, nearly the last fence having almost half-a-dozen hunting forms extended on its bank at the same time. A lady came down at an up-bank near the stand of the Fairy House, but was none the worse for it, and continued pursuit. No one saw more of the cream of the thing than Mr. Harper, on a fine brown "M.D." horse, who makes nothing of his rider's welter impost. The field was nearly the smallest gathering I ever saw with this pack, but the flooded state of this flat basin had no doubt a most deterrent effect, not to speak of the menacing aspect of the day itself.

Let me now, in the dialect of the chase, hark back to a few hunting passages I was forced to slur over in my last letter, from want of space or time, or both. The Dunlavin day in Kildare was noticeable for a very large field in an out-of-the-way place nearly a score miles from any railway, and for the galaxy of ladies to be seen pursuing or viewing. The run lasted nearly two hours, part of it was fast, and over one of the stiffest bits of country that ever tried horseflesh; and yet a thorough-bred *ci-devant* chaser with an inclination to eagerness at his fences—Gazalier, ridden by Mr. Dundas—never put a foot wrong, as I hear, in the whole circuit. Another feature worthy of notice in this fox chase was the fact of the quarry, when pretty dead beat, seeking asylum in an outhouse, where "the fox," as the fowl committee of the hunt know full well, had proved a very hen-harrier and poultry glutton. He was ejected from this, and soon after run into; for, not to quote the "engineer hoist of his own petard," he illustrated the Augustan bard's couplet:

"—— non lex est justior ulla,
Quam necis artifices arte perire suâ."

The hunting record of Meath last week, when cut down to shortest limits, runs thus : On November 28th they found at once at Philpotstown, had a short ring by Churchtown, and *swam* into their fox in the river near Dunleery Bridge. A nice gallop from Trimbleston to ground at Ballytallion followed. On the 29th they met at the Ball Abbey near Kells, H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught being in the field. Boltown and Killallon failed for once to-day. Clonabraney and its many foxes showed no sport, neither did Sylvan Park. Friday, December 1st, they met at Headfort, but a shooting party had been there during the week, and the woods were foxless to-day. Farrenalcock Gorse turned out a good sharp fox, who ran well for thirty-seven minutes through Bellair over the Moynalty river, through Kingsfort, till he got to ground in Challoner's Gorse. Kingsfort Glen held another fox, who ran by Cherry Mount and Oakley Park in the direction of Farrenalcock, till the hounds had to be stopped as the light waned.

There has been a certain amount of dislocation in the hunting arrangements of this present week, consequent on deaths and departures. Mr. Gray's neat register of hunting fixtures for Kildare announced a meet at the Hill of Allen for Tuesday. Mr. Kelly's (of Navan) well-got-up hunting calendar invited us in the rosiest-tinted pasteboard to attend the Meath lists at Bellinter on Tuesday at eleven of the clock. The latter summons was postponed till the following day, to enable loyal Meath to pay a parting tribute of respect to his Grace of Abercorn, who was resigning his high office and leaving the shores of Ireland. The Kildare meet was abandoned out of sympathy for the family and respect for the memory of Mr. O'Connor Henchy, who was buried on that day. Nor, indeed, could the hunt corporation do less, seeing that many lustrums ago, when the fate of hunting hung in the balance all over Ireland—I allude to the famine years, when the value of property was little more than nominal—Mr. O'Connor Henchy, like the famous Roman dictator, did not despair of the Republic, but consented, at personal sacrifice, to undertake the presidency

and hold it till plenty smiled once more on the plague and famine stricken soil. How ably he acquitted himself of the self-imposed trust, many in Kildare remember gratefully; nor were his years of office barren of high-class sport—quite the reverse. In the senate he represented his native county ably and efficiently for many years, resigning this trust only from failing health and the torture of rheumatism, which completely and incurably crippled a very athletic and graceful form. His love for hunting was shown by his constant attendance at all the practicable meets; and till recently his well-appointed carriage was quite a feature in the Kildare gatherings, while his house overflowed with hunting guests, and foxes were seldom absentees from his gorse and woodlands.

On Monday the Kildare hounds were due at the neat and picturesque village of Branoxtown, which is close to the converging parks of Harristown, Giltown, and Sallymount. The news of Mr. O'Connor Henchy's death had been brought to the majority by the post of the morning, and it was mooted whether the hounds should not be sent home. The presence of a great many strangers decided the master in negativing this suggestion. The result was a most successful day. Moore Hill was the first covert drawn, and from its glen some three or four foxes issued forth, while the hounds got on one whose course leads to the conclusion that he was the same vulp who had baffled the pack after a long hunting run from Stonebrook not long ago, for his line for a long distance was precisely identical, threading his way by the banks of the Liffey, by the Blackthorns, Geogheganstown, Ardenode, Mullacash, and finally getting to ground on its banks. Hatfield Gorse was then visited after a few preliminary explorations, and from it broke a fox, who, it is not unfair to suppose, was one of last year's good stout tenants, the survivor of several long and perilous chases. His first point was to the Carlow road, thence right over the Ballymount Hill into Ballintaggart Gorse, which did not detain him much longer than I take to narrate the

fact, if so long; thence down the valley, over the flooded brook which leads to the water meadows, till there was a check on Rathsallagh Fair Green—much appreciated by all who had ridden for twenty-five minutes over give-and-take land, hill and dale, at the top of their horses' speed. Slow hunting now took the place of the fast and furious scurry of the opening scene, and the line eventually led back to Hatfield.

There was a prudent lull in the fox campaign in the Irish Shires on Tuesday, for, looking at the list of those who attended Lord Abercorn's valedictory *levée* in Dublin, it is evident that the fields would have been very thinly attended and shorn of many of their best men. There was, however, one district in Meath where the armistice was broken, and one fox had the narrowest escape from being rolled over. It was on this wise: Mr. Preston's harriers were due at Kilmessan on Tuesday at noon; but the day was so soakingly wet, and the downpour so heavy and incessant, that the hounds did not leave their kennels till one o'clock, when the master sent them out on the off-chance of a field. No one turned up on the way to the fixture, nor did it seem probable that any one would bring a horse out in such teeming torrents; so Suter, the huntsman, put the hounds into a field close to the old castle of Riverstown. At once they dragged on to the edge of some wild, unenclosed gorse, into which they dashed frantically, a fox breaking in front of them, and racing up Tara Hill, apparently bound for Lismullen Woods, but a bend to the left brought him into Castletown, and thence into the Bridge Woods of Bellinter, where the hounds were stopped as they were entering Dowdstown —the regular draw for the next morning with the Meath foxhounds. For thirty-five minutes the bitches never had to stoop for an instant, as the scent was breast high, and they are bred to race. Only Mr. C. Rothwell, Suter, and perhaps one more, saw this fine gallop; for, as bad luck would have it, there *was* one keen sportsman at the meeting-place who stayed till he was drenched, and, after all, missed the run of the season! An accumulation of unmerited bad fortune!

Wednesday, the 6th, was almost continuously fine, and I mention the circumstance as something quite phenomenal in this wet cycle. The Meath hounds were to meet at Bellinter this forenoon, and those whose way thither lay, as mine did, through a part of the cream of the Ward Union vale, must have been struck by the omnipresent traces of the recent rainfall—rivulets swollen to the proportion of brooks, brooks to the volume of rivers, while superficial water filled the furrows of the pastures and made small systems of lakes and ponds on every side. The river Boyne flows between Bective and Bellinter woods, in a stream not altogether unlike or unequal to the Thames at Twyford. In ordinary weather there is a wide margin of pasture land fringing either bank; but now a swollen and turbid torrent was rushing down between the wooded slopes, and had usurped every bit of intervening land: small chance for a fox if he tried the device, which was so successful on a former occasion, of swimming across from Bellinter to Bective.

But the hour is eleven; carriages are driving up continuously to the hall door of Mr. Preston's fine mansion; hacks are being walked about in numbers, as their owners make "a meridian" of it inside. The multitudinous peafowl, who had been busy repairing the damages of yesterday, are being scared away by the red invasion into the surrounding woods. Altogether a fairer or a more animated scene than a meet at Bellinter, viewed from the hall steps on a fine day, need not be craved, with its thronged court-yard, its circular private racecourse in front framed in by well-grown large-girthed timber, while the historic hill of Tara overlooks all. It is now a quarter-past eleven, and still there are lingerers, but the hounds are busy with a cub, whom they have found near the house, and whom they bring in nearly a complete circle to the edge of the kennels, where they roll him over. Dowdstown is the next draw. Few go into the woods with the pack; most ride round the park wall on the road, fully calculating on thirty or forty minutes' covert hunting before a fox can be

forced into the open on either side. Coffee-housing is at its fullest tide, when suddenly something or somebody spreads the news that the hounds have found, run through covert, breasted a hill, and are now half a mile ahead, pointing for Somerville. We ascend the hill and see that the news is only too true, the only consoling feature being that, instead of going straight into Somerville, they are bending up to Lismullen, having run a loop, and that if we are quick we can probably catch them at Lismullen Gorse. This programme was carried out to the letter, and we laggarts came on the track as they were leaving the gorse, just in time to see a good sportsman, Mr. Dunville, kicked off his hunter into the very miriest bed of mud to be found, by the playful heels of a neighbour. We are now crossing the road, and brushing through the outskirts of Lismullen's extensive park (Sir John Dillon's), again skirting the gorse, and plunging down at better pace into the valley below us, till we reach Walterstown, when our fox turned sharp to the left, and got back, I believe, to Lismullen Woods. In the evening they went back to Bellinter. I fancy there was more feasting than fox-hunting on the occasion. Among the recenter arrivals in Meath for the hunting season is Captain Low, late 8th Hussars. He was riding to-day a very neat chestnut son of Conjuror's (the sire of Juggler), dam by Recherché, who looks like slipping very fast over a country. Those who rode back *viâ* Dunshaughlin found that the Ward Union men had just ridden through it in pursuit of their stag, who, enlarged at Rathbeggan, had given them a capital chase, leaving the poor-house to the left, and thence on by Porterstown and Priestown.

I must say I admire greatly those who have the courage of their opinions, as the Gallic idiom goes, and in a similar way I admire those who have the courage of their livery. Now the costume of the Meath hunt is red with blue collar, and I have no reason to believe or fancy it has ever been changed or the blue collar abolished; yet at the covert side I can only see one man who sticks to the regulation pattern—Captain Shirley Ball, late

8th Hussars, whose bay mare could make it a very conspicuous beacon, I fancy, in a quick thing over a big country. Every one wears the blue at night. Why it is tabooed in the day by most men passes my power of divination. It is not more peculiar than the Pytchley white, of which the members of that hunt are not yet ashamed or tired, I believe.

The week past was not memorable or brilliant in Louth, though a good fox turned up in Lisrenny on Tuesday, who ran by Louth Hall and Charlestown, skirted Gudderstown Gorse, and gained Bragganstown Gorse after an hour and a half's hunting, when fresh foxes met the hounds, and one was taken on to Charleville.

On the 30th, after killing a bad fox, they found a second at Mosney, and came away well by Corballis to Ballygarth, where a tidal river stopped proceedings, and the rest of the day was spent between Hilltown and the Carnes, with lots of foxes, but short goers.

On Friday, the 8th inst., Mr. Kelly, printer, Navan, *The Field*, *Bell's Life*, the *Sporting Gazette*, the *Irish Sportsman and Farmer*, and I know not how many more organs and oracles of sport, proclaimed with the trumpet of the mighty press *urbi et orbi*, that the Meath vehmgericht would hold its session at Summerhill, at eleven of the clock a.m., and there issue its writ to its executive officer, Goodall, against all and sundry foxes in the vicinity, for wicked conspiracy against the peace and safety of Sir Chanticleer and Dame Partlett and their innumerable belongings. "*Habeas corpus*," ran the writ—we who read between the lines may add "*si possis*." Now Summerhill, says an authority on topography, is a post town in the parish of Larracor, baronry of Lower Moy Fenragh, county of Meath and province of Leinster, five miles from Trim, seventeen W.N.W. from Dublin. At that time it contained 49 houses and 331 inhabitants; whether it has increased or decreased since the publication of my dictionary of reference matters not now. It is a neater village than one often comes across, with a few much better class houses; as a sheep fair it is,

I believe, celebrated beyond its own limits. What is far more to the purpose just now to relate is the fact of its accessibility from Dublin by two lines—the Midland Great Western, which lands its passengers, human and equine, bound for Summerhill at Maynooth or Kilcock; while another line, the Meath, brings its hunting freight to Drumree, some five or six miles distant also. Close by the village is Lord Langford's fine park, and a straight, wide avenue, something short of half a mile I should imagine, and with rather a sharp gradient, brings you to his spacious house, which overlooks not only almost every acre of the home park, but a very great extent of the flat pasture vales of Kildare, Meath, and Dublin also. By a strange coincidence, in a rather open winter it has fortuned that a Summerhill meet should be associated with the Arctic powers of frost and snow. The latter prevailed on the first occasion when his Royal Highness and a large party attended the fixture; the former was our antagonist to-day. Neither, I am happy to say, marred sport, or even considerably delayed it.

I think to-day the hospitality of lords overrode the punctuality of princes, for it was nearly half-past eleven o'clock when the hounds were put into covert, and the woods became vocal forthwith. Of the first fox I can say nothing; I believe he went away somewhere in the Bullring direction. The second broke near the Kilcock Gate, and ran very sharply over a wide field or two, as if he meant to go towards Agher, when he wheeled for Drumlargan, and beat the hounds out of scent. Whether this were caused by the sudden incubation of a very dense fog, which completely blotted out the Kildare side of the country from view, I leave to the discussion of the learned in the philosophy of scent. From Drumlargan we got into a clearer atmosphere, and could see our surroundings. Let us take a glance at them. Kildare has sent a representative body to this assembly. Mr. W. Forbes is on Darius the Persian, a very handsome blood-like bay horse; whether called by that Oriental title because if he says "no" at

a fence his law, like those of his ancestors, "altereth not," I cannot say, but will only add that on his "going days," which are the rule, he is a "rum one to follow, a bad one to beat," like the Laureate's horse. Mr. Percy La Touche is on Gondola, a very racing-looking mare, selected perhaps from her brook-jumping powers. Mr. F. Rynd is on Grey Plover, who seemed to have taken out a patent last year for winning hunters' and farmers' races, and is none the worse or less temperate for his achievements between flags. Captain Davis is riding a very thick, strong chestnut, a "Blood Royal," I should imagine, and a very perfect fencer. Among the visitors are Mr. C. Macdonald Morton, long the popular and successful president of the Westmeath Hunt; Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Mr. Dundas, Mr. Price, and one or two more from the 3rd Dragoon Guards; Captain Graves Sawle, A.D.C., on a very perfect iron-grey horse; one or two of the 7th; and Colonel Frank Forster on the beautiful Greek Fire.

I should have stated that "society" in Ireland was dancing last night at Emo, Lord Portarlington's beautiful house and park in the Queen's County the Duke of Connaught being one of the guests there. The ball was to be followed by a meet to-day (Friday) on Maryboro's heath; but a strong contingent forbore sleep and rosy dreams of fair women, and posted across to Summerhill—no small tribute to the Meath hounds and the Meath country.

We are now by Garradice Gorse, which I attempted to describe, I think, in a previous letter. The fog threatens, but has not descended on us completely. The find is so quick, there is hardly an instant to do the needful to girths, etc. The first narrow bank and ditch are jumped, apparently safely by all, when in the very second or third field scent fails again, though we are entering on the land of turf and old pasture; and, after a slow drag on as far as Pierstown, the order is given to 'bout ship and try Garradice again. At this conjuncture of affairs down came the fog seriously, sights and sounds assuming that grotesque,

unusual, "Alice in Wonderland" character that fog sometimes imparts. Home and stables seemed to me the right thing under the circumstances, and I had gone some distance with this intent, when I was arrested by the note of a single hound, so completely drowning those of the pack, that I turned back to the gorse to see what was to be seen. Lots of foxes, and lots of covert hunting, but no power could force them to break; so Mr. Waller gave us the cue for Beltrasna Gorse, some three or four short miles off. Again the fog came down like a pall, and as one or two widish ditches had to be done *en route*, and as said ditches were pretty full of water, there were some bathing scenes enacted, and a Triton or two to be seen disporting themselves in muddy waters. We are now at the edge of this good gorse, near enough to learn that it is tenanted, and by no recreant either, for he breaks within five minutes, pointing as if he meant to give us a gallop to the Grange; but a second impulse sends him towards Culmullen. Again scent proves most catchy, and we are at fault. There is a small patch of "swedes" in front, and Goodall holds them over this, and regains the thread, which leads within a few hundred yards of Culmullen Covert. Strange to say, our fox, who had ample leisure, did not enter it, but turned sharp round, crossed a lane-way, and appeared verging back to his old haunt. A fault again! but 'tis only momentary. And now for ten minutes or fifteen the hounds carry a fair head as they cross a fine bit of wide vale, watered by a brook or two; but as we rise Mullagh Hill, with Kilmore rectory on our right, scent almost disappears, though, if ever fox ran over scent-retaining pastures, they were before us here. A road meets us now; it is getting duskish; good-byes are said; arrangements made for Enfield to-morrow with the Kildare hounds, or "Lost London" with the Ward Union; when the pack, who won't leave a big pasture they are in, suddenly begin running again, taking the line past Mr. M'Gerr's house, on to a road. Here another parting of the few left occurs. But again the pack will not be denied; one or two couple have made out the line on the

MISS PERSSE OF MOYODE CASTLE.

far side of the road, and are hunting away gaily. Colistoun Covert is within a field or two now; but darkness is overtaking us apace, and the kennels are many miles distant, so at last the pack is stopped. This run, an incomplete edition of the letter S, would have been charming had it only been done at a better pace and with fewer breaks, for a better line of country could not easily be found. Mr. Waller has to deplore the loss of a very good bitch, Wishful, who was ridden on.

The staple of hunting "gup" to-day was of an extremely quick gallop yesterday with this pack, run in a fog so dense that, unless you were almost on top of the hounds, you had no chance of seeing the fun. I was not out myself, and can only state that there seemed a most unanimous consensus that it was "a real quick thing," and that it took a good horse to stay with hounds at all. It was somehow on this wise. After some rather meaningless hunting round Lord Darnley's good gorse of Rathmore, a move was made to Tullaghnogue Gorse, from which the pack issued forth "tied" to a good fox. Some sixteen or seventeen started on very fair terms with the flying hounds; hardly half-a-dozen survived to the first check, which was at the end of seventeen or eighteen minutes as I hear, Mr. Kearsley having held a front place all through the scurry, with Mr. Hone and perhaps another, Lord Langford having been equally efficacious in cutting out the work till his good and gallant grey, landing on a stone or stump of a tree, rolled right over him, with a stiffening effect which must have made hunting the next day rather a mixed delight. A noble lord, whose experience extends over a great many of the best packs in England and Ireland, told me that in his line he met one impracticable place, from which he had to turn away, and that the pause in selecting a more negotiable spot cost him the remainder of the gallop. The fox, it seems, ran to a high bank near Medestown, and was wholly unaccounted for afterwards, the theory being that he had run his foil back and then lain down. The Kildare run of the same date was unmarred by fog—a fortu-

nate circumstance, as one of the actors informed me that, between wire and bog, the track was anything but fascinating; a very fine show of foxes in the Nine-tree Hill country was the pleasanter side of the picture.

The show of horseflesh at Summerhill to-day was very attractive. Weight-carriers are getting very scarce in Ireland, but Captain Kearney and Messrs. Brown, Dunne, Campbell, Carew, and a few others, seem to have found the *desideratum*. There was a smart Blood Royal four year-old out, who was fencing with all the hereditary talent of that strain, while Captain Low was on another son of Conjuror's, "The Crow," who is almost a fac-simile of the Duke of Connaught's Lawyer horse, and as clever, though perhaps not quite so powerful. A lady, Mrs. Drake (I hope I may be pardoned naming names: it is a rare hunting one), who was riding a very well-trained bay horse, seemed thoroughly at home in the biggest part of the country. Mr. Murphy, of The Grange, rides 13 st. hunters, almost as well known in the chasing world as in the hunting, and his grey mare of to-day was no unfit companion for her stable mates; while a grey cob ridden by another Mr. Murphy was an admirable performer, and so was Captain C. Ponsonby's brown mare.

I hear Lord Waterford has been showing his field very good sport lately, while Sir David Roche's thirty-five minutes without a check from Fedamore Gorse is among the best recent triumphs "down south."

On Saturday, the 9th inst., the Kildare hounds—to whom Saturday ever brings sport, seeing that it draws them from hill to dale, from gravel to rich loam—met at the little village of Newtown, near Enfield, the outer edge on the west of their domain, here bounded by Meath eastern and western. Cappagh Gorse, the first draw, proved for once false to its holding traditions, though a fox had evidently left it recently. Not so Ballycaghan, the next, whose huge area seemed lined with foxes. The difficulty of ejecting the hunted one from so extensive a covert is not small,

and the master was much plagued by late comers, (I, too, cry *mea culpa*), who blocked the best avenues for departure. At length, when every one was half frozen, he broke away—a beautiful rich red fox—and gave us for our preliminary fence, before we could get to the park, a very wide bank and ditch to jump. Once over this, it looked odds on a race to Lara or Courtown; but something made our fox turn back suddenly, and nothing came of it but another long stand at ease while the hounds were dusting him in the gorse. At last who-whoop sounded gratefully on the ear, and now we knew we were bound to Courtown, whose extensive but thin plantations always harbour foxes, though they are easily scared away by such sounds as an army of hunting men two or three hundred strong would make clattering down the road on their way to the draw. To prevent this, Mr. Mansfield implored the field *not* to hurry on in spoil-sport fashion before the pack; but Courtown and its hospitalities lay in front, and I think the brandy of cherries and the wine of Xeres were master passions in not a few breasts just at that moment. "All's well that ends well," and the draw of Courtown plantations had a good *finale*. Three parts were drawn in mute silence and expectation. At last there is a prelude to the overture. "He breaks! he breaks!" with Lara or Straffan in his mind's eye. "He's back! he's back!" but not for long, for *ecce* fox racing away over the Courtown Park lands, and with head turned westward, giving us to imagine we were to gallop back to Ballycaghan. The first fence proves unlucky to some, and there are one or two stiff up-banks next. Then our fox turns leftwards, over those pleasant flat pastures which are mainly divided by ditches and small banks, over which you can send your hunter at twenty miles an hour. A very pleasant phase of hunting was this sailing away over small brooks and shingles with the conviction that the far side was "all right." We are now within a few fields of Laragh Covert. We have crossed a couple of by-roads, if not three, and now there is a slight pause by some cottages—Baltracey is the name of the place, I believe; the

hounds have rather overshot the mark. Will Freeman has them right in less time than I take to write the fact, and from this point we hunt on steadily and at fair pace parallel to the Naas and Kilcock road, when our fox again inclines to the right slightly. We cross one of those drainage canals which, fortunately for us, have soft, sloping sides, down which we slide into the watercourse, to climb up the far side; and now, when we look up to take bearings, we find ourselves passing a semi-vacant gaunt-looking house, which we know to be within a few hundred yards of Mount Armstrong. Two or three furzy fields (Hodgestown is the local name) and as many fences bring us to the outskirts of Sir Gerald Aylmer's fine park of Donadea. There is a lodge gate a few score yards down the road, which will bring you down a long straight avenue to the castle woods. If you would fain see the end of a good straight fox, who-whoop, they have him! They have earned him well, for scent has not been breast high, and I don't think they can have run him less than eight or nine miles from find to finish. I talked just now of two or three hundred horsemen. I do not think there were nearly so many out to-day, though the field *was* large, and there were not a few visitors from Limerick, Cork, Dublin, Meath, Galway, etc., at the rendezvous. Lord Oranmore represented the latter county, Mr. Rose did the same for Limerick. Grey was decidedly the winning colour to-day. Sir J. Higginson went in his old form on a grey; Mr. R. Kennedy was on a grey, so was Mr. W. Blacker; but few greys or hunters of any colour could have performed more beautifully than Major Dent's fine lengthy grey and Mr. Robertson's well-known hunter of the same hue. The Hon. Captain Rowley, Mr. A. Macneil, and Mr. Chapman represented Meath in the fore front of the fray, and Captain R. Mansfield kept his place very near the pack all through. The Inniskillings were in great force and form, and so were the 3rd Dragoons.

The Coolattin Club is a small and very select corporation, devoted mainly to whist and fox-hunting, while French cookery

and matured Château Margaux are not within the table of prohibitions. Lord Fitzwilliam houses the club, and gives them other privileges. Carlow and Wexford find foxes. The club was in session last week, but so far have not, as I learnt, had much sport. Tuesday, their opening day, was diluvial.

The meet of the Queen's County hounds on Friday, at Maryboro' Heath, led to little sport: the effervescing loyalty of the populace, which broke into shouting and hurrahing, was fatal to finding foxes early. Cremorgan in the afternoon held as usual, but scent was catchy, and one or two hard-riding men would not let them work out their problem, so the sport was not of a high order.

There is again breach and interruption of hunting arrangements in Kildare, owing to the sadly premature death of Mr. Archbold, of Davidstown, last Saturday, after a very short illness—typhoid fever. Tuesday's meet at the eighteenth milestone is consequently transferred to Friday, while Wednesday's fixture is for the kennels.

I recollect writing about a meet at Davidstown, Mr. Archbold's residence, last year. Few could then have imagined that his young life, so full of vigour and promise, would have terminated so abruptly. The mourning for Mr. Archbold—I do not mean the perfunctory livery thereof regulated by degrees of consanguinity—will be very extensive among all classes, specially in the counties of Kildare, Wicklow, and Carlow, where he was best known as a landlord, a friend, and a neighbour—known only to be beloved. As a sportsman his loss will be immensely felt, for so great was his influence that fox preservation of the strictest character became a fashion and a rule all over his estates. He was a fine rider to hounds, notwithstanding his height and weight; a first-rate judge of horses; a naturalist by taste, experiment, and observation; and, for the last few seasons he was a master of harriers. Sir John Esmonde, another good friend to foxes and fox-hunting, died rather suddenly in Wexford about the same time.

X.

"Dark, dreary, and dull was the sky,
With rain clouds the heavens were big."

Traps and Trappers—West Meath—Kilbrew—Mr. Reeves' oyster beds and harriers—The Marquis of Ormonde—Straffan Bridge.

THERE has been no scarcity of foxes this year in Ireland, with a few notable exceptions. The cubbing season was not a blood-thirsty one, for the simple reason that scent for several weeks was at zero, but no master of hounds that I have heard of complained of not finding game, even if he was denied the capability of hunting it. Since cubs attained their majority the course of hunting, unlike that of true love, has run in the smoothest of currents, and though I know of two blank days, I can hardly localize a third in the whole of hunting Ireland. The season was most favourable to vixendom; when foxes were wanted they were turned down, and the aliens or naturalized vulps thrive like the natives, and yet the trapping curse, like the trail of the serpent, is over us all, and saps fox-hunting in its very foundations. One of the worst features of the case is this, that these vulpecidal engines have now been sown so broad-cast over the island, and familiarity has so vulgarized them, that many a proprietor of large acres, who had set a bad example in bringing trappers into his park and woodlands, and who subsequently felt anxious to neutralize the mischief he has done the fox-hunting interest in his county and vicinity, would be unable to lay the spectre he had invoked, or call

in the traps which had strayed or been stolen in the course of his raids on rabbits. Under these circumstances, of course, there is less restraint than ever in the manner of trap setting. Farm labourers who have tasted the sweets of hare, rabbit, and even pheasant catching by this simple and inexpensive process, will not easily be induced to abandon it. The snare is not primarily set for "the fox" save by a few exasperated individuals who fancy they have been overlooked, perchance, in the distribution of fowl money; but if the fox is caught, *vice* some more saleable or edible quadruped, *tant pis* for the fox; he is knocked on the head and put out of sight, while the trap is reset in hopes of better luck next time. These observations are elicited by the fact that out of three foxes found recently in the covert of a well-known fox presever on the same date, two were maimed by traps, and unable to take their part when hunted; while the third proved a good straight runner.' It is well known that the covert owner is a foe to trapping. Whence then these tripod foxes? Simply from traps being common in the neighbourhood, and in such general use, that foxes would be more dexterous than nature made them if they managed to escape them altogether. But not only are traps common from the causes I mention; they have become "a leading article" in country shops, and it seems now as natural and as little peculiar to purchase a trap as a hand-saw or a ten-penny nail.

Let us now glance at Western Meath, where it is pleasant to find that Mr. Montague Chapman's well-directed zeal and energy in the cause of sport have not been unrewarded.

On the 4th they met at Lord Greville's residence, Clonyn Castle, and found three foxes in the coverts at the back of the new castle. Settling to one, they followed him towards Drumcree into Mooretown, where he did not hang long, but broke again and almost retraced his steps, finishing in a rabbit burrow. Kiltullagh Plantations held another, but the hounds ran into him almost immediately. Another, found in Williamstown Gorse, they

killed before he could get into Rockview. A Reynella fox ran a ring to Clonlost, when darkness stopped hunting.

On the 7th (Thursday) they were at Baronston, and found three foxes in the Bog Covert. One took them past the fine mansion, through the lands of Tristenagh Abbey into Sonna, where he was viewed by the new gate. The Plantations here did not detain him a moment, and he was next forced through Kildollan Gorse over Slanemore, a grassy elevation, where the pasture is old and sound, and the going as good as any in West-meath. Here, however, as he was passing Ballyote Chapel, a cur dog came on the scene. A long check ensued, and perhaps the most promising run of the season was marred. Frewin Hill Gorse was next drawn. Here they found at once, and ran straight to the shores of Lough Owel, where their fox wheeled to the left, ran through Mount Murray, and thence made Clon-hugh, where the earths were open, and a good fox respited.

On the 9th they were at Moyvaughly, where they found a fox, who did not stand up any time before them. Mosstown, which is always well preserved, held a brace, and the hounds went away gaily with one, who led them to the top of Knockast Hill, the highest ground in this neighbourhood, which was smothered with fog that seemed to kill scent; at any rate, the fox was not accounted for.

On the 11th they were at Drumcree, the residence of General the Hon. Leicester Curzon Smythe, whose good gorse (a reminder always to myself of an extremely pleasant gallop right into Meath) has just attained holding growth after having been cut. The find here was very quick, and was followed by a capital thirty minutes, ending at Windtown, where the fox got to ground. Hopes Gorse held a second, who started over a beautiful line and ran nicely for a couple of miles, when he suddenly disappeared in a coney hole, when the odds seemed in favour of his going on to the hill gorse at Knock Ion.

On Monday a beautifully clear, diaphanous atmosphere showed

everything in nature at its very best, and revealed objects which fog, haze, and rain clouds had obscured for months. The Ward Union stag-hounds met at Norman's Grove, one of the fixtures nighest to the metropolis, some nine miles (Irish) distant, and the assemblage collected there was one of the largest which this pack has had since the season opened formally at Ashbourne. All Ireland was more or less represented there, and though Meath held out the tempting bait of Grange Geath Gorse in the forenoon, and Hussey's Gorse after luncheon, not a few threw in their lot with the stag, among them Lord Langford and Mr. A. Macneil. The Garrison sent gunners, riflemen, and staff men to the fray—red soldiers, blue soldiers, and green—and Dublin of course poured in a flood-tide of its sporting citizens. Enfield, who gave perhaps the best gallop of the season last year (in some judgments), was the quarry, and he got his liberty at Nutstown, whence he bounded on by the Caulstown Brook, over the Dunboyne road into Ballintray, thence by Priestown in a line parallel to the Ratoath and Dublin roads, across the road by the gorse covert of Kilrue, and thence *viâ* the Moulden Bridge into Ratoath village, where he ran the road for a short time in view, and many who had gone well up to this point, and fancied the cream of the day had been fairly skimmed, turned their horses' heads homewards. A few, however, stayed on to the end, and had a rattling finish up to Bournestown, the last part, as I hear, being very fast indeed. Among this division were Lord Clanmorris, Mr. D'Arcy, Mr. Hone, and Captain Graves Sawle. I hear the timers made the run an hour and a half.

The night which succeeded this beautiful, soft, balmy Monday was memorable for one of the heaviest rainfalls of a watery season, the gushes of rain seeming to be propelled from hydrants. "The rain a deluge poured" in Ireland as in the "Bay of Biscay O," and fortunate were those who were well housed during its fury.

By eight or nine o'clock a.m. of the 12th, all traces of the

storm had vanished. True, flocks of sea-gulls, driven in from the coast, dotted the green fields and roads, and everything had a flooded look, while furrows and runnels were brimming to overflow. Tuesday was beautifully mild and bright, and the sun shone out gaily. The Meath fixture for the day was Kilmoon Police Barrack, a solitary little fortalice or block house, in a wide green valley, bounded by the gentlest of grassy elevations. It is some fifteen or sixteen miles (English) from Dublin, not quite so much from Navan, a long distance from town or railway station; so that there was little of that miscellaneous crowd which curiosity and a fine day muster whenever a popular hunting fixture is very accessible from a capital by rail or road. But, on the other hand, it was far from a small gathering. Louth sent many of her sons and daughters thither (admirably mounted, too); Meath turned out strong; while among the visitors were Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy. Time, however, fails me to tell of the beauty and fashion congregated in this lonely wayside spot, now bright with colour and full of life and motion; of Mrs. Dunville's indefatigable and charming pair of bays; of a sporting tandem; of a small string of thoroughbreds owned by Messrs. Saurin and Reynolds; for we are under way already to a small stick covert, with a little bit of plantation at one end, on the side of a grassy hill, which, though not covering very much more than a rood, has always been full when I have happened to see it drawn. To-day was not doomed to be exceptional. After a very little forcing, a fox broke away in the Ashbourne direction, running straight for a short distance, when he inclined to the left, and was presently lost, giving us to understand very plainly that scent was uncommonly coy to-day. A second fox had gone away from the faggots in another direction; but it was no use dragging after him, so the task before us was to get back into the lane-way by which we had come into the covert field. A thorny up-bank, which required a hunter's instinct where to place hind and fore legs, interposed itself, and afforded a good deal of excitement and fun; but at last

we *are* in the aforesaid lane-way, and trotting on to the wooded height of Kilbrew, on the far side of which, by a well-known brook, lies another stick covert, which I think Mr. Waller only made last season, and which we found well tenanted on the last occasion. How many it held to-day is to me an unknown number. We went off with one over huge grass pastures in the direction of Reisk Gorse first, when he turned to the right, and gave us the benefit of a lane for nearly a mile; then he went through the grove and shrubberies of Green Park, turned once more down the vale, and, I should think, joined his scared brethren in Kilbrew; at any rate, after a mile he was given up, and Corbalton Woods were now the scene of exploration—a quick find in the wood next the Navan road, a canter across the park; another for some distance along the Dunshaughlin road sidings, then a mile or so more to the right of Corbalton, and that is all I can say of the day's performance, which certainly was most unequal to the grand theatre that witnessed it.

Is the Turkish question likely to lead to a solution of the oyster difficulty? Is the Danube to enrich us with sturgeon flesh and caviar? The lines of Virgil occur as I ponder these things:

> "Quam quibus in patriam ventosa per æquora vectis,
> Pontus et ostriferi fauces tentantur Abydi."

Had the bride of Abydos an oyster bed for her dowry? or had the Roman patricians eaten them all? I would transfer the reader's mental eye to the banks of the Shannon, and by a rural burying-place where a head-stone tells the tragic fate of the Colleen Bawn. Here Mr. Carey Reeves, rich already in salmon weirs, has enriched his foreshores with well-cropped oyster beds of the green-fin species, which, strange to say, are much affected by the gastronome in Ireland and France, while his brother contemns them in England. There are also some importations of oysters from Arcachon, but the green-fin bivalve is his staple. Along these banks of the great tidal river roam many good stout hares; and,

as fox-hunting does not flourish much in the county Clare, Mr. Reeves finds his useful pack of harriers attended by large fields—as for instance on the 7th inst., when a goodly company, comprising Mr. and Mrs. Reeves, Mrs. Phelps and her boy, Mr. E. Kelly, Mr. J. Bennett, Mr. O'Donnell, Major Gore, Mr. J. O'Donnell, Mr. Bulger, and Mr. Burke, etc., had a capital run from Tiervarna by Burrane House and Knock Wood; the last part extremely good, nearly three miles without pause, and two more gallops afterwards, less brilliant, though a kill crowned the last from Carandota.

On the 13th the Kildare hounds had a *quasi* by-day at the Kennels, which are under the shadow of the palace which Strafford erected for himself, now in ruins, but ruins which attest the "thoroughness" of the planner. Though a by-day, and out of the regular roster—which, as I remarked in my last letter, was interrupted by the death of Mr. Archbold—it was notified to all the members of the hunt by cards, to the public by the voice of the press. This circumstance, and the central position of Naas, drew a very large concourse to the meeting-point; H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, attended by his equerry, Captain M. Fitzgerald, being among the visitors of the day—a list which also included Lords Oranmore and Clanmorris, the Hon. T. Scott, Captain Graves Sawle, Mr. A. Macneil, Mr. Skeffington Smythe, Mr. Rose, several of the 3rd Dragoon Guards and Inniskillings, of the Royal Horse Artillery, 7th Dragoon Guards, and 4th Regiment of the line. I have seen much larger fields on similar occasions, but there were quite enough to mar sport or to enjoy it, if the elements of sport had only been forthcoming.

Osberstown Gorse, to which I have before introduced your readers, looked as large and luxuriant as ever. The flat country round was much more suggestive of snipe-shooting than hunting, after our recent watery experiences, but within the inclosure drainage had made the fox's haunt dry, and comfortable, and warm. The hounds soon told us of one at home, and, after

much bullying, a splendid specimen of his race, of the richest mahogany hue, and white-tagged as to his brush, emerged into the open, but after a very brief excursion returned to his stronghold, to be again expelled after a long similar process. Another excursion towards Old Town followed, when, scared by some object or other on the canal bank—we may imagine a native bargee—our fox ran the gauntlet of the field, while one or two vainly endeavoured to cut him off from the gorse, but he made good his vantage-ground. After another half-hour of vain effort to force him into the open a third time, he was given up, while we crossed the Liffey by a ford, and drew up at Gingerstown Gorse, an unenclosed wild patch of furze; and having explored it as well as the neighbouring covert of Castle Keely fruitlessly, we were sent on to Landenstown, where search was equally futile. Bella Villa held not, and Kerdiffstown, the never-failing, failed us in our hour of need, while Palmerstown, its neighbour, followed suit. The trail of the serpent may have been over them, the trail of the fox was not; by this time light was waning, and a general dispersion took place. Mr. Mansfield lost a good servant's horse near Osberstown, who broke his leg in galloping into a blind ditch. To-day's proceedings reminded me of the still-existing custom in England of beating the bounds of a parish. We beat the bounds, I should think, of several. This black-letter day is the first serious check which the Kildare hounds have experienced this season.

The Newbridge harriers had, I hear, a very good thirty minutes last Monday from Mr. Coffey's lands, at Faircross, to Silliot Hill Gorse, with an outlying fox, who took his pursuers over a trying line, which weeded out all but some three or four sportsmen, among whom were the huntsman, Mr. Knox, R.H.A., and Mr. Medlicott.

Sport in Louth has been of a most mediocre order during the last ten days or so. Thus, on the 5th, they visited Duffy's Cross, and found plenty of foxes in Corballis, but between getting headed

and so on, they yielded no sport. Bragganstown furnished a brace, one of whom gave only a ringing pursuit.

On the 7th, meeting at Townley Hall, Dowth Hall was the first draw, and it produced a brace of foxes, who got to ground very soon. Townley Hall and Mellifont were empty to-day.

On the 9th they were at Barmeath, which did not hold either a fox or foxes, neither did several gorses about Johnstown. A wild gorse, however, near Drumcar, was tenanted. The fox ran into the park, and got to ground near the house. Charleville, after this, turned out a smart fox, who ran for seventeen minutes into Williamstown, when he, too, got to ground.

I fancy "These Bonds," *in esse* or *posse*, real or simulated, have rather stayed the plague of testimonials from which we in Ireland have suffered infinitely less than you did on your side of the ditch. Testimonials in Ireland have for the most part been genuine embodiments of gratitude, admiration, or esteem; or, perhaps, all three combined. Hence it was a pleasure to your scribe to record last year the presentation of a handsome piece of plate by the Curraghmore hunt to the Marquis and Marchioness of Waterford. It is an equally agreeable task to tell this season of the gratitude of the members of the Kilkenny Hunt to the Marquis of Ormonde, which found expression this week in a congratulatory address on his marriage with the Lady Elizabeth Grosvenor, and took concrete form in a beautifully modelled golden fox—the symbol of the royal sport, which, but for the noble marquis's purse and prestige, would very probably have become an unknown art in the county of its birth (in Ireland). It is no secret that Lord Ormonde's liberality tided the Kilkenny Hunt Club over financial difficulties which looked very menacing at one time. It is pleasant to find that recent success has not dulled the recollection of good deeds. The Marquis of Waterford read the address. The presentation took place in the picture gallery of the castle, where a long line of ancestral Butlers illustrate the history of Ireland, which they often moulded. The Kilkenny hounds, whose tri-

umphal progresses I have frequently recorded, had, I hear, a bright day on Wednesday last, when a good fox took them from Garryricken (a covert of Lord Ormonde's), by Killmory and Ninemile House, through Butler's Wood, on to the foot of Sleivenamon Hill, where pursuit was stopped. Another run from Davis's Gorse, though far less straight, ended in a kill. "The Rock" on Friday revealed a good supply of foxes, who will probably give a good account of themselves by-and-by, though their education is only inchoate at present.

The *on dit* is that the Earl of Clonmel has accepted the presidency of the Kildare hounds, which would be only a case of interrupted succession, his father having mastered this pack long and successfully. Venerie and woodcraft are in this family a tradition. Among those who have suffered severely in limb in their pursuit of mimic war is Mr. J. O'Donnell, of Trugh Castle, Limerick, who, I regret to learn, sustained a compound fracture of his left arm and dislocation of both joints when hunting with Sir David Roche's hounds at Balinagarde. Mr. Morrogh's stud of hunters were sold on Thursday last in Dublin; but it is not impossible that the end of the season may see Mr. Morrogh riding again, as his broken leg is doing wonderfully well.

"Water, water everywhere" (I cannot add "and never a drop to drink," for the country I write of is Ireland, and Ireland has never hitherto suffered from a lack of potables)—brooks overflowing their banks; pastures turned into mere; the sidings of the roads, where not under water, in a semi-quagmire condition, as one sees a well-trampled fair green become after a few hours of rain and bullocks; but there is little to wonder at, for at the covert side to-day there was unanimity of opinion on one subject at least—that no one had ever been out in heavier or more continuous rain in these latitudes than to-day! Vain were leggings, vain were covert coats. As in fences, so in wraps and devices to keep out rain, there is always some weak or unguarded spot through which the insidious moisture is soon found percolating; and it is almost

impossible to watch or guard the entire man in such a downpour as to-day. Why, in an hour tops were as full of water as they could be, each foot enjoying the benefit of a cold tub for hours. I once recollect a very smart sportsman, whose get-up was a thing of beauty, telling a field who were condoling with him on having to ride home a long distance, after he and his horse had been swimming across either a river or canal, that his nether man was not even damp; "for, you see, my boots and breeches fit so very perfectly that it is mechanically impossible that a drop could get in." No one dare affirm anything of the kind here. Men, horses, and even the few ladies who ventured out, had that *poulemouillée* look as if they had been swimming rivers and canals for some time. My tale is of the Kildare hounds at Straffan Bridge on Saturday, the 16th inst.—a beautiful scene in fine weather; but, with an horizon of the narrowest limits, and rain blackening the air, scant leisure remains to admire even the most picturesque object. I fancy most people smiled an internal smile as they saw that the hunting madness had been pervasive enough to draw a very large assembly to the meeting-place. Every one, whatever they felt, put a cheerful courage on, and no one railed at the elements, no matter how pulpy, draggled, and miserable their sensations might have been. A glance at our field here! and, as the ladies have been very heroic in braving not merely the rain and water, but their unbeautiful effects, let us do all honour to *le courage malheureux*. Five were riding nearly all this fearful day —Lady Annette La Touche, Mrs. Adair, Mrs. Langrishe, Mrs. Moore, and Mrs. Morris. Would that they could have been rewarded with a short, sharp gallop, to carry away some pleasant memories of this most pluviose day! Driving on a hack car were the Hon. Mrs. Barton and Mrs. St. Leger Moore. The usual Kildare field was increased by a good many visitors, among whom was his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught (attended by his equerry, Captain M. Fitzgerald), Mr. J. G. Adair (from the Queen's County), Captain R. Barton (late 9th Lancers). Mr. A. Macneil and

the Messrs. Murphy from Meath, Mr. Longfield (who was riding that well-known mare Miss Brayley). Lord Oranmore was on a very hunting-like grey, while his second string was a powerful chaser, who had done well in the land of the Gaul; Major Dent on his good-looking grey, was the only 7th Dragooner. The Inniskillings were represented by Captain Bloomfield alone, I think; the 20th Hussars by Captain Irwin; the Staff sent Captains Sawle, Crosbie, and De Montmorency; the R.H.A., Colonel Sarsfield Green, Mr. Knox, Mr. Aitken, and one or two more. But there is no time for observation or gossip; the hounds are working through Lodge Park. In ten minutes or rather more they found a good-looking fox in the long clump by the river, whom they hunted from plantation to shrubbery, from shrubbery to plantation, till a check took place in a sort of nursery to the walled-in kitchen garden. I believe the vulp did his best to break away; but the rurals, who could not work on farms such a day as this, were in a cordon all round, so we lost all chance of a run, and soon after lost our fox too. Now commences the only bit of fun vouchsafed to us hitherto: a large part of the field are inclosed in a place from which the only extrication is by jumping a quickset hedge and ditch, while the remainder of the sporting world of the day look on and criticise. It was rather amusing for five minutes; no one actually came down, though a back or two looked in danger, and hind legs were dropped dangerously short. The rest of the day was spent (or mis-spent, according to some versions) in drawing vainly about three parts of Straffan Coverts, Castle Dillon, Boston, Cullen's Wood, and Bishopscourt. By about three o'clock rain ceased, and for an hour nature looked lovely, the evening lights bringing out the landscape strongly, as varnish does on canvas. The field meantime received constant accessions of sportsmen and sportswomen who had been sane enough to reserve themselves for dry weather.

The Friday previously was anxiously looked forward to by those who take their pleasure in the green fields of Kildare and Meath.

The former pack met at the eighteen-mile stone, and went first to Silliott Hill, where a fox got headed, and showed no sport afterwards. In Punchestown Gorse they found a second, who was followed—not hunted—over Punchestown (where the brook watered a gallant captain who has turned his sword into an agricultural or pastoral implement, and also received in its embrace a very hard-riding dragoon); thence by Tipper and Craddocks-town and Killashee, into Rathascar, and so on to Herbertstown, whence pursuit was abandoned.

In Meath, Larracor was the meeting-point, Trotter's Gorse the first draw. It did not hold; but Moneymore gave them a fox, who ran by Rathmolyon, and was believed to have jumped into a conservatory, for the hounds made nothing of him afterwards.

The Ward Union men had another good day last Wednesday, the stag taking them past Dunshaughlin from a point near the Ten-mile Bush Farm, and was captured somewhere near Drumree.

While sport has been so scant in the midland and eastern portions of the island, it is refreshing to hear of something better in the south. Lord Doneraile's hounds met at Miltown Castle on this occasion, and, after putting one fox to the ground and walking some distance over a fine line with another, went back to try Boulard a second time, when they got away close to their fox, and took him by Curraghglass and Gibbings Grove, where he bent round for his original place, and saved himself in a drain. Time forty-five minutes; horses beaten off.

From Bowen's Court, on another day, they had a sharp seventeen minutes' race to ground, and then a long run with good bits in it right into Sir David Roche's country, the fox getting to ground in the main earths at Darragh.

I see the subject of the increase or decrease of game in Ireland is being discussed in your columns just now, and *traps and trapping* are assigned their proper place in accounting for the scarcity in some districts which would otherwise have abounded in fur and feather. Hares are just now the desideratum, and hares

are minishing most alarmingly. As a set-off, however, I may remark that on Saturday last, while the Kildare hounds were on their way to Irishtown Gorse, I saw in one of Major Barton's large pastures more hares than I think I ever saw in a single field in England or Scotland.

The west wind brings a tale of better sport in the west than we have been favoured with in the east and midlands. This is an epitome of Mr. Burton Persse's "good things" since his hounds resumed hunting: On the 4th, twenty-three minutes, at great pace, over a fine line from Carra Gorse, in the Loughrea country; three besides the master having about the best of it. On the 9th, a brilliant thirty minutes over a fine line from Castle Taylor, and a hunting run to follow. On the 12th, a good gallop in the afternoon, which darkness stopped in the Athenry country. On the 14th they were in the Eyre Court country, and raced down a fox from Chesterfield Gorse in fifteen minutes, rolling him over in the open. A bad fox in the evening gave them an hour of slow, twisting hunting. On the 16th they found a good fox at Raford, and killed him in the open, after a capital twenty-five minutes, interrupted by only one slight pause; while Carnakelly set them going again, and gave the field rather more than enough to do.

P.S.—Scent has returned to our fields. The Kildare hounds had a capital day from the Downshire on Monday. The Meath rejoiced in three good runs that day—forty-six minutes, twenty-six minutes, and twenty-three minutes, the last ending in a kill. On Tuesday they had one of the most extraordinary long persevering pursuits that any pack ever enjoyed. It began at the Poor-house Gorse, Dunshaughlin, at about 11.30 a.m., and finished with the death of the fox at Parsonstown (not in the King's County) at about 2.30 p.m., having been uninterruptedly sustained during those hours; while bits of it were fast enough, and it was all over grass. I must postpone details till my next letter.

XI.

"Well-nigh three hours the open kept,
As stout a fox as ever slept."

Stony Batter and mud batter—Poor-house Gorse run—Rathbeggan stag-chase—Garradice—United Cork, etc., etc.

If we are to believe high authority, no verses can live or please the public ear for any length of time that are written by water-bibbers:

"Nulla placere diu nec vivere carmina possunt
Quæ scribuntur aquæ potoribus."

"Who water drink, in water think;
Good wine's the sap of poet's ink."

And yet, all this notwithstanding, the laureate of the great games of Greece tells us that water is the best thing out, ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ. Lord Palmerston's gloss upon this was about on a par with many of his witty and wise sayings. The story goes that Mr. Gladstone, who had just returned from the Ionian Isles, was expatiating upon the "curious old wines," strong of resin and sulphur, which he had recently been quaffing, when his chief struck in with the remark, "Well! I *now can* understand Pindar's eulogy of water." Without daring to detract one iota from the great element in the composition of all things, I may be permitted to remark that just now there is far too much *en évidence* for hunting purposes. The roads overflow with it; the fields are partially

turned into lakes; the pastures, with their beaten-down grasses, look as if a heavy roller had passed over them; and the grass land in the rich vale of Dublin and Meath rides so heavy, that no one whose figure does not in some measure resemble the Newmarket standard has a chance of seeing the hounds if they run fast and long. How, in the old O.U.B.C. days, one used to envy the Titans in flannel who pulled five and seven in "the 'Varsity"; how one longed for their expanse of chest and swelling biceps! Now, if one has to ride at all, the ambition is all the other way. Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt! oh that my millionth or billionth grandsire (according to Darwin) in the æons gone by had transmitted to me the prehensile sinewy legs (how lovely they would look in tops!) and the long, thin, flexible arms of the Simiæ! But then perhaps the horse would be too slow for such ambitions, and a pterodactyl would be essential for the requirements of scent and pace in slime. Footprints in the sands of time, indeed! We are daily making our mark in the pastures of green Erin, writing our characters too in a fashion that will last for many a day. Mud fever and scarred legs have of course appeared in stables, but I do not think the visitation has been so general or severe as in former years; perhaps we understand the treatment better than of yore. If any one is ambitious of trying an experiment in mud baths and their consequences on cloth and horse's coat, I will tell him the best plan I know of for his operations. Emerging from Arran Quay in Dublin, and facing northwards, you will in a few hundred yards find yourself in a street not unknown in song, called "Stoney Batter." A quarter of a mile further will bring you into comparative ruralism, and here "mud batter" begins, and for three or four miles your progress is through a deep liquid slush canal, fortunately not more than a few inches in depth, whose bottom is so uneven that with every jolt of your springs or peck of your horse the filthy liquid flies upwards, to settle on coat, hat, or face, or all three. This is the main road to Dunboyne, and I believe

Trim also. Those with local knowledge avoid this Mala Viâ, making a considerable *detour* through the Phœnix Park. Those in a hurry to catch hounds, say at Dunboyne or Norman's Grove, may easily fall into the trap. For the benefit of those who like to present one side of their tops moderately clean at a meet, and to be recognizable by their acquaintances, I mention the abomination.

Monday, the 18th inst., was, in the language of the country, a soft day, though I am not sure that enough rain fell to warrant the epithet fully; but, if not falling, it was in suspense, and its descent was little more than a question of hours. A small field met the Ward Union pack at Kilrue, the 3rd Dragoon Guards forming the staple of the soldier element, and they sent a coach-load; the red-coats might nearly be counted on one hand, and the visitors did not much exceed a score. Among them was Lord Clanmorris (on a racing chestnut), Captain Fitzgerald (on a young brown horse), Mr. Murphy (on Sapling), the Hon. Captain Rowley, and Captain M'Clintock Bunbury. The sport was not so good as usual. A good-looking red deer, enlarged on Mr. Reid's land at Ballymacoll, showed a strong *penchant* for road work for a bit, running short circles till past Ballintry, when he struck off towards Mulhuddart, inclined slightly to the right till he reached a place called "The Main," and then went off in a bee line till he gained soil and sanctuary at Clonee Bridge, the last mile having been done at good pace, and crossing a couple of small brooks—or ditches which had the pretentions of brooks to-day. The stream at Clonee was in flood, and had overflowed its banks considerably, so it was no easy task to save the quarry, as the pack were swimming round him; and, even after they had been collected together on *terra firma*, it took nearly half an hour, two colley dogs, and a lasso to effect a capture. In compliance with the wishes of the farmers, no second deer was enlarged.

The week began well in Kildare. The county pack met in Blessington village, when, notwithstanding the invitation of a

lovely day, which succeeded a night of rain, the attendance was very small indeed. The customary programme is to go from the main street of Blessington through a spacious avenue (which once led to a lordly mansion that the lava flood of '98 did not spare) into Downshire Park, a large walled-in grassy space, of which only a small portion is fringed by trees, where the surface is broken up into a curious succession of hills and hillocks, on the slopes of one of which a gorse covert was planted long ago, and has given Kildare a series of as good and famous runs as any she embraces in her area. This covert has been cut down for some time, and has not yet attained holding age or proportion; but the spacious park has many a furzy patch in its extent, and these are seldom without a fox or two. The ordinary routine was adhered to now; the usual result followed—a fox turned up in the park and crossed the Naas road. The hounds followed him—they could not be said to drive or force him along; but as they were on Slieve Rhua Hill the complexion of things changed for the better, and from this point they sent their fox gaily along into Punchestown Gorse in the vale below. Here several fresh foxes jumped up, but the pack stuck resolutely to their own, and forced him out of the gorse, when he ran rather by a different line to his first departure, keeping over Athgarrett Hill. Next he crossed the Downshire Park, and ran through the gorse there till he reached the Blessington road. Here he turned back into the park, and got into a sewer, from which he issued presently (not bolted), and was rolled over close to the town of Blessington. Strangely enough, a second fox issued very soon after from the same sewer; so we may hope *non deficit alter*, to run as good a chase when wanted by-and-by. I do not know the time of the gallop up to Punchestown, the first stage; the return or second stage occupied forty-five minutes. The line was a grassy one, and, the soil being light, it rode quite unaffected by the recent rainfall.

On the same day the Meath hounds met at Brittas, and had forty-six minutes thence *via* Robertstown—twenty-five minutes very

good from the second covert drawn—and twenty-three from Farrenalcock Gorse, killing their fox. A Leicestershire man who was out told me the country and flying fences reminded him much of that paradise of hunting men and women.

On Tuesday, the 19th, a rather limited field met the Meath hounds at the ancient village of Dunshaughlin, whose surroundings and historical traditions I alluded to in a recent letter. Like Mr. Gummidge, Dunshaughlin had seen better days; and brighter hunting days than the present had beamed on it—for the array is sparse enough, considering the character of the country and the facilities for reaching it. The cause is not far to seek. His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught was the guest of the 7th Dragoons last night, in Newbridge Barracks; the Royal Horse Artillery also entertained a number of hunting men; and we may be quite sure that the staff in the Curragh Camp are opening hospitable arms to other hunting guests, and stretching their stables to the utmost limits of expansion to put up their hunters. The soldiers are the true descendants of the Knights Hospitallers, and when hunting (the image of war, you know) is in question, huts and barracks, like Aladdin's wonderful lamp, are made to furnish everything that is good, genial, and comforting to the spirit and flesh of mortal. These facts will account for the absence of many from the ranks in Dunshaughlin (let me duly acknowledge the hospitable provocation which nearly made me a deserter); while peradventure lots of hunting "casuals" prefer the easily reached Newbridge and its surroundings to the equally easily reached Dunshaughlin and the vicinity. *Quot homines, tot sententiæ.* I can only say that, while I am ignorant at this instant of the result of the Newbridge gathering and *les gros bataillions*, I can aver that we, the minority, had a hunting run, which, for length and country traversed, is rarely equalled by any pack in the three kingdoms in a cycle of seasons. The morning was fine and grey. By 11 a.m. it began to cloud over heavily, and menace of rain filled

the western horizon, to the confusion of those who had no overcoats, and had donned the "better" pink to do honour to the smiling morn. Half a dozen cars and carriages—less than a dozen certainly—and some sixty or seventy horsemen form a total of our field muster. Among the visitors are Lord Rossmore on a very fine lengthy chestnut, Colonel Forster on Greek Fire, Captain Candy, Mr. Dundas on a roan, Captain M'Clintock Bunbury on a clever-looking grey horse, and Mr. Rose on a good-looking brown horse; while a few Ward Union men helped to swell the ranks a little. It is always a subject of regret to see the fugleman of a field *hors de combat*, if only temporarily, and Mr. Trotter has certainly attained that position in Meath by continuously riding to the front, no matter what the country, for three or four seasons. He was driving to-day on a car—forbidden to ride for a week or two, in consequence of a fall. Trotting down the usual laneway, we come in ten minutes to a small gorse in the middle of grassy fields. It is known as the Poor-house Gorse, for there is the poor-house facing it, a quarter of a mile to the eastwards. No sooner were the hounds "leud" in than a fox went away, pointing for Ashbourne, when he inclined a very little to the right, and ran through some wild patches of gorse at the back of the poor-house. Here we were confronted by a very wide ditch, which could not have been jumped, as least by most out, had the sides not sloped inwards. Some jumped, some crept down, nearly all got over somehow. In a couple of fields we are bearing to the left; our fox is evidently ringing back, and there is not much scent; so for a time there follows a very short check in a small plantation. And now we are under way again, in the original direction, but at rather a slow and hesitating pace. Presently we cross the Dublin road, and here we are by the edge of the river and wooded bank that guards the fearful Ten-mile Bush Farm, which I have more than once noticed in recent letters. Our course diverges now to the right a little, and the first obstacle

is a rhene or brook, ugly enough and big enough, and with certain black tokens on the far side which speak of soft falling if you get so far. How many got in I cannot say, but among the unfortunate were two who we may be quite certain *did* harden their hearts and put their horses at it with resolution—Goodall the huntsman and Captain Candy. (Melting moments these.) Nor did the process of getting *out* look half as easy as getting *in;* but their friends must not mourn—no coroner will pronounce his "Found drowned" on them yet, at any rate. Over the brook and a smaller edition in the shape of a drain or two, we are confronted by a huge double, sedgy and reed-grown—really nothing much to jump, but rather appalling if you are not sure of your mount. I think Lord Langford, Captain Bunbury, and Mr. Dundas piloted us over. I fancy I recollect following a lady who rode a neat grey over it. We are now entering Parsonstown Manor, close to the Batterstown railway station, and hounds begin to mend their pace forthwith. Some stalk off to the right, some keep a line parallel to the metals (just the course a deer ran the other day); the former had much the best of it when the pack turned, which they did presently, running through Johnstown lands, thence past Dunshaughlin village, and then dipping down into that fine valley under Culmullen. Why the fox did not try Culmullen, I know not—the harbour was within a mile or rather more, and it might have saved his life; but the probability is that he was one of a litter brought out near Parsonstown Manor House, and for that reason he neglected Culmullen and the friendly gorses of Mulhussey and Colistoun, which latter covert the hard-riding Mr. M'Gerr looks after most efficiently. If this theory be correct, it brought him over again across the Meath line by Parsonstown, over the wide pastures of the Bush Farm (whose gates were fortunately open), thence across the Dunboyne Road to a point very near the Fairy House, the capital of stag-hunting. Here he turned, and made Mr. Thunder's park of Lagore, through which he ran resolutely

onwards, neglecting apparently its countless burrows, into which he might have crept and saved himself. Once more he brushes by the Poor-house Gorse, and threads that path which he has taken twice already, across the Dublin road, and so on to Parsonstown. But if this place saw his birth, it also saw his death. Who-whoop, who-whoop! they have him at last!—a strong and determined fox, if inclined to twist and zigzag not a little; for the chase began at 11.30 a.m., and till 2.30 p.m. they have been running him continuously, and sometimes at good pace. Multiply seven miles Irish by three, and you will have a total of twenty-one Irish miles, done on rich holding grass lands; nor is seven Irish miles a very grand or exaggerated estimate of fair hunting pace. Had this run been moderately straight, it would have been something extraordinary; as it was, I have heard of nothing equal to it this season so far. To be on grass land for three hours is in itself a luxury, and, beyond a small garden near a cottage, I cannot call to my mind any plough in the circuit. Thrusters of the *noli me tangere* order despise circular runs. To the preponderating majority they are everything, enabling them to see many stages, if not all, of a fine long pursuit, and to be in front also occasionally.

In a twisting run of this immense length, of course there were innumerable changes in the front ranks of spectators. The metals of the Navan line, for instance, threw out one or two good men into temporary exile. Some went wide at Culmullen, and lost that good bit. In the second stage the hardest rider and the best-mounted man in the world might find himself pounded in the Bush Farm. Goodall came to watery grief a second time, when going in his usual fine form. (By the way, I have since heard that a sportsman from Leicestershire had his ear invaded with a deafening effect by a small fish, which he picked up in the brook.) A noble lord who had gone well desisted in the Bush Farm, after his third fall. Lord Langford, who had been extremely well carried for two-thirds of the journey, lost a fore shoe

towards the end, and had to give up, when lost shoes and dead beat were *not* synonymous terms. Passing through Lagore and Dunshaughlin Gorse the last time, there were not many near the pack, but among them were Messrs. M'Gerr (on a capital black hunter), Dunne, Coleridge, Dundas, Thunder, Maher, and Aungier, while Messrs. Hone and Kearsley were among the finishers. Nearly every hound took his part in the worry. To have ridden eight or ten miles of the run was a treat; to have never quitted them was an aureole to man or horse. The ladies, three especially, went admirably.

In Kildare, on the same date, sport did not patronize the crowds who ventured to the Barrack meet. There was a gorgeous gallery. The jumping powder purveyed by the soldier officers was as exhilarating as ever; but scent and luck combined against the prospects of the day, and a fox chopped in Martinstown, and some pottering round the Curragh and Carrick Hill, were nearly the sole outcome of great expectations. The soldiers and civilians who trained down from Dublin pronounced the unanimous verdict that the game was not worth the candle, seeing that the Great Southern and Western line, who are more liberal to the racing than the hunting interest, made the said candle an extremely expensive taper. Two consecutive fine hunting days is too much to expect just now; consequently Wednesday was as continuously dripping in the earlier hours, as soakingly heavy in the later, as the heart of a wildfowl need wish.

The Ward Union hounds met at Rathbeggan, very near the glorious finish of yesterday's fox chase, and through rain and mud a select party of about thirty-five, or perhaps even less, journeyed to the trysting-place, something like a dozen English miles from the metropolis. On the left hand, after passing Dunboyne, flood usurped the entire valley; the right-hand pasture land lay higher, but was partially under the dominion of water. The best thing to do under the circumstances was to ride up towards the highest land in the basin; so the deer-cart was sent up the Fairy House

Lane, and an unknown, untried deer made her *début* on the lands of Porterstown. From this point she pushed on past Dunshaughlin village, and skirted the Lagore Marsh—now more like a sedgy lake—then holding on by Harbourstown towards Priestown, she turned back as if for Batterstown; but brushing by the Pinkeen Bridge, where there was a slight check, she held her way on direct to the Fairy House racecourse and stand, beyond which point, when seemingly bound for Ratoath, she crossed the road leading to that town, and once more got on to the verge of Lagore, giving the half-dozen who were still pursuing a deepish river to cross on our track. It was just a nice fly; but horses are *not* in flying trim after an hour and fifty minutes in such a country. However, Mr. McCullagh did it cleverly and quietly. Lord Clanmorris, who was on a very smart chestnut mare, probably to be heard of between the flags, etc., etc., hopped over it as if it had been a mere drain. Mr. Hanaway, who was on a hot but very good chestnut, sounded its depths; the other three—well, we found out a ford which was very nearly a swim for some horses, and so got over after a few minutes' delay; while Charley Brindley, on his celebrated grey mare, despised this slow process, and flew it to our right. Another river, hardly jumpable, hardly crossable, is in front now; the hounds have thrown up their heads; rain is coming down in heavy torrents. Another deer must be left out, I very much fear. We are now close to Ratoath, or its outer edge, and the time is said to be two hours from the enlargement to the fault at the Ratoath stream. "Never rode such a race," says a noble lord; "No, more did I," says a commoner, who always rides hard, whether between flags or in the hunting field. Is it not somewhat of a coincidence that two such runs should follow each other so immediately, and partially over the same country? for the big Poor-house drain, an initial fence of yesterday, was in the track to-day.

His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught was out to-day, riding the roan horse I have before alluded to, and for an hour—

as I hear—was quite a pioneer. I cannot speak of his *hauts faits*, nor of those of several good and gallant men, for the simple reason that I did not see them, having only nicked in for the latter part of this splendid gallop, when several left off riding, thinking the best part of the fun was over. I hear that among the heavy weights Mr. O'Reilly and Mr. Meldon were going very well. Mr. W. Stewart's Gamekeeper mare also proved herself as stout as she is brilliant, persevering on till the end; but I believe the fugleman of the earlier part of the run was Mr. Coppinger, on Honeymoon.

In justice to the authorities who rule over the mud canal I referred to, I must say that at last some repairs are being attempted. Stones are laid over the grosser ruts; but plenty of mud remains for experimental observers. Every day lately has brought sport to the United Hunt (Cork). As illustrations we may take the 15th, when they met at Dunkettle, the residence of the M.F.H., Mr. Thomas Gubbins, in much rain. A quick find, and a four-mile steeplechase till the fox was rolled over in a fifty-acre field, were the results. On the 18th they met at Mogeely, and found at once in Castle Martyr, Lord Shannon's park, sending their fox to ground in a limekiln, after about two miles. In the Strand Road Covert they found a second, who took them along gaily beyond Cloyne, where a long check ensued. Saunders, however, presently hit off the line, and him too they rolled over in the open, Captain Hunt, Mr. and Miss Longfield, seeing the chase very well all through. The mastership of the pack will be vacant at the close of the present season, and the bait ought to tempt enterprise and adventure, seeing that the committee, besides keeping the country, proffer ten or eleven hundred a year. The pack belongs to the committee, who would lend it on terms and conditions of the most liberal nature to the master: and the stock of foxes is one that reflects great credit on the preservers and promoters of the royal game in their riding of Cork.

Of Thursday I can only state that the weather seemed to prelude a white Christmas, for it was very bitterly cold, and much soft snow fell for an hour or two, though it did not lie. I made a mistake in a fixture, and did not find out my blunder till late, after hacking a long distance. A blunder in Ireland is, of course, a very natural thing; but, as such a thing might possibly occur anywhere, I make a suggestion, in the printing interest, that hunting men who have many engagements should have cards in triplicate—one to be placed near the scene of early shaving, one in the hall, and one in the saddle-room, so that your groom's audit may correct any lapse of eye or hurried glance of your own.

The card was correctness itself. My eye was wrong; or did I trust somebody's unauthoritative *ipse dixit?* I fear this was the case. Rahinstown meet and the subsequent events are now matters of (fox) history. I dip my pen into the ink bottle, and record the sport of the day. Ink is fluid still—not frozen; that's encouraging, at any rate, while frost is supreme out of doors, and has no small influence within, too. Rahinstown forms one of a triad of parks which almost border one another—Summerhill, Lord Langford's; Agher, Mr. Winter's; Rahinstown, Mr. Fowler's. It is a phœnix, inasmuch as it has arisen recently from the ashes of a mansion burnt down some three or four years ago, of which catastrophe I recollect writing you an account at the time of its occurrence. The country round is not pleasant or inviting to the hunting eye. Moss and peat mix largely with the vale; while the little hills, of which there is a perfect eruption, are poor and thin of soil—gravelly for the most part, and not scent-retaining by any means. No greater contrast could be presented to the wide-ranging pasture through which one rides or drives either from Kilcock or Dunboyne. The outlook in the earlier hours was very anti-hunting. Snow flakes were eddying about in the air current; the grasp of hard frost was on the earth; it seemed even betting on a fall of snow. By ten o'clock, however, the sun came out, and everything brightened a bit, though the cold was

great, and a searching north wind bit into you shrewdly. The eastern mountain barrier gleamed white with new-fallen snow, ice filmed over the surface water, and one's reins gave one the feeling of touching hot iron. There was a very good-sized assembly in front of Mr. Fowler's house, and the juvenile element, like the bees in Virgil's poem, "ludit favis emissa juventus"—the working "cells" being, I suppose, the school-rooms, now to be forgotten for six (we'll hope very pleasant) weeks. Some were on ponies, hunters in miniature; but one young gentleman rode a very fine brown mule, who seemed, if willing, capable of great things. There were not a great many visitors or strangers present, if we except Lord Rossmore, Mr. Forbes, and Mr. Russell, of Limerick; but here is the gorse, which clothes luxuriantly one of these little hills I alluded to just now. It is tenanted, be sure, for no hare could evoke such notes, were the Meath hounds capable of riot—of which I believe the single-season hunters are quite free, even under strong provocation. Away he goes, making a half-circuit of the park, and past the farmstead, the hounds very near him, and carrying a very good head indeed. Now they are on plough—the soil peaty, and a poor medium for scent—they are at fault; but Saffron, a fine, large-sized hound, repairs the telegraph, and away they go nearly back to the gorse, then on towards the obelisk in the lands of Dangan Castle, leaving Rathmolyon village and church to the left hand. Presently our fox turns in to the Bullring Gorse, where the brook and double caused some amusing scenes. After a mile—it is no use persevering, we *must* give him up—the record is lost.

Agher Woods are now the scene. A quick find, a tremendous scurry through the park at racing pace for those who were not keeping a sharp look-out for the pack, followed by a sharp burst into Agher Red Bog. Garradice Gorse, the next draw, is a better prospect for *the* gallop we want to stir the blood and quicken pulsation. One hound, with a very deep note, tells us a fox is there, though not very willing to leave its warmth and thickness.

At last the steeplechase begins (because men somehow start from this gorse as if they knew they had not more than a mile or two before them, and are determined it shall be fast, if brief). The third fence, an up-bank, has a treacherous cut on the far side, and Mr. Dundas and Mistletoe come down, apparently heavily. A few fields more, and grief is rampant; loose horses, led horses, all the tokens are there. On through Larch Hill lands; but the hounds are pausing now. After this it is a potter, I think a fruitless one; at any rate, your scribe pottered home minus a shoe. This pack was at Balrath Bury yesterday. Foxes were not wanting; but, beyond some hunting between Balrath and Drewstown, the day was inglorious.

The Westmeath had, I hear, fair sport on Monday last, between Gaybrook and Galston Parks, killing a fox from the latter after about an hour's pursuit. From Irishtown, on Wednesday, they had another good chase, the line leading past Ballinacargy and Rathcourath.

I find in my account of Tuesday's engrossing run (from the Poor-house Gorse, Dunshaughlin) that I have over-stated the time by a good many minutes, twenty at least, though my estimate of the distance is not very incorrect—some say understated. This makes the hounds' performance a better one even than I had conceived. Captain M'Clintock Bunbury, I should have added, as first up, had the handling of the stout fox prior to the worry.

P.S.—I must not forget to include among the great hunting successes of the week a very fine hunting run which the West Meath hounds had on Friday last, while we in Eastern Meath were "beat, baffled, and blown" from want of scent; nor a capital gallop which the Kildare hounds gave us on Saturday (to-day) from Cullen's Gorse, when the upper crust of the earth was frost-bound, and it seemed doubtful whether hounds would come to the meet at all. The pack had a moderate day on Thursday last, when they met at Tinoran cross-roads, deficient earth-stopping being the principal feature of the day.

XII.

"Shivere, shakere, diluculo!
May be very wholesome—but not for Joe!"
Revised Latin Grammar.

Maynooth—Cullen's Gorse—Christmastide—The Mount Neil run—Mr. French's death—Trim—"London."

THOSE who got up before nine o'clock a.m. on Saturday, the 23rd—and to do so required some stoicism—saw the winter of pictures very grandly illustrated; a sky cold and repelling, while a sun which only Turner could interpret was suffusing the east with saffron hues; the air hushed and still; beasts and birds wearing that patient, subdued air of resignation which the first touch of winter in earnest brings; ponds skirted over with ice; but—consoling feature!—the earth was overspread with rime, and it requires but little divination to know that such a frost is seldom a stayer.

The Kildare hounds were due at Maynooth, where the moist water-sodden vale, well carpeted with luxuriant grass, afforded a better prospect of riding than any country I know of outside the Ward Union limits; but so hard was the ground in the forenoon that I saw a very bold pointer, full of go and with good feet, utterly unable to beat his ground in his wonted style. "Will the hounds come?" was the anxious problem of many. The hounds did come, and the ivy-mantled ruins of the old Geraldine keep looked down upon a very goodly company gathered together in

the cause of fox-hunting; but as their horses' hoofs made the adamantine roads resound again, the hope of hunting to-day seemed somewhat a forlorn one. A very cosmopolitan gathering it was. Lots of border men from Meath, well-mounted as they generally are, among whom we may mention Lord Langford, the Hon. Captain Rowley, Mr. A. Macneil, Mr. Dunne, and a few more; the Queen's County sent Mr. and Mrs. Adair, who seldom miss a Kildare Saturday, and are equally fortunate in securing good front places in the gallops which Saturday rarely fails to bring to Kildare. Lord Oranmore represented Galway on a fine stamp of bay weight-carrier, who, I hear, galloped fast in France between flags.

H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, on his Lawyer horse, was in the field, attended by Captain Maurice Fitzgerald, his equerry. The Dublin Garrison was *not* in force, the Hon. Captain Scott and one or two more being the sole champions of that powerful hunting body. Dublin contributed Mr. Roberts and Mr. Robertson, both admirably mounted. Mr. Rose was ready to ride hard for Limerick, his native county—no hard task on the beautiful Zouave horse that carried him. The 75th Regiment of the line sent Captain Beresford and Mr. Keevil Davis. Kildare—Lower Kildare, I mean, for in all probability Upper Kildare was looking to its skates—was in strong force. Leicestershire was championed by Captain and the Hon. Mr. Candy, while Eton (Bucks) sent two of its *alumni* in Mr. W. Forbes's sons, both admirably mounted, both fully capable of doing justice to good mounts. But the bell rings; the play begins; we are entering the splendid park of Carton through the Maynooth avenue, Lord Maurice Fitzgerald the sole representative of his ducal house in the field to-day. Park-hunting is park-hunting, and, though few fairer theatres exist for its exhibition than Carton, it is not interesting in the relation or the reading. Let us pass over an hour or two spent in fine woods and spacious pastures, and let us trot up the lane leading to Cullen's Gorse, where the usual jam and other

features of the sort reproduce themselves. The find is quick as lightning; a few who are very well placed jump through the well-known gap, cantering down the pasture in front of them, only to find that the fox has not gone on his usual track now; he has turned towards Carton, and we have to clatter back along the lane-way again, to find that the fox, probably headed, has bent to the right, and is running towards Castletown Park. *Towards*, but not *to;* for presently he bends to the right, and, shaping a course over some swampy-looking ground, which really was not bad riding at all, and most suitable to the exigencies of the day, he swept along at great pace through this bit of vale; on through Corbally, passing by Mr. Wrecker's farm, where a double or two detained some sportsmen; and so on to the gentle acclivity of Windgate Hill, down once more into the vale, pointing for Rathcoffey; then with an inclination to the right, through Griffinstown, by Lady Chapel on to Laragh. And here a flock of sheep caused a long check, and suspended hunting for some time, till the clue was regained at Taghadoe Covert, in which our fox, who had got fifteen or twenty minutes to the good, had taken refuge. From this point he was hunted till the first bit of newly turned-up plough brought the pack to their noses, and gave our fox another good start. Thence we followed him slowly to the cross-roads of Windgate Hill; over the hill, across the Celbridge road, through Captain Johnson's farm, till waning light and failing scent stopped further investigation, for I cannot call the last part of our chase pursuit. The going over the vale was very good—unexpectedly so, I should think, to many—and, though a few banks had rather hard tops and sides, the fencing (mostly of a flying nature) was very pleasant, and there were not so many falls as might have been anticipated. Mr. Forbes (on Hock) and one of his sons (on a capital brown hunter) got off on capital terms, and made use of their advantage; so did Messrs. Bayly and Hanaway, two hard-riding men, who will not, I fancy, summon me to Calais or the land of the brave Belgians for dwelling on this personal character-

istic, or naming their names. Captain R. Mansfield and Mr. Percy La Touche met a huge ditch in their progress, which their horses failed to clear. (It is described as almost unjumpable, if not quite so, where they took it;) and here they had to spend many a *mauvais quart d'heure* till ropes came to extricate them, and the first set, I heard, proved too weak for the strain!

Talking of horses and their peculiarities, I heard of a rather dangerous experience the other day; but I was not out myself on the occasion, so cannot speak from observation. A bold dragoon —and he needed all his courage—bought a horse whose fencing was uncertain, but of his vicious or playful habits when his rider was prone no doubt existed. After several escapes it seems our gay cavalier, who had fallen at an up-bank, was climbing up the steep eminence to get out of his hunter's reach. The latter, however, would not be denied his opportunity, so he seized his rider by the back of his coat with his teeth to have his innings. How he was rescued it boots not now to tell; suffice it to say that I have seen the said dragoon going well since, so his nerves may be supposed not to have suffered. Most systems would have felt the shock for many a day. The Ward Union hounds met at the Flat House on this date, and had, I hear, a very enjoyable gallop.

Apropos of the peculiarities of hunters, let me record here a very curious circumstance, to which I know no parallel. Mr. Morrogh, on the occasion of his recent accident (a broken leg), sent his stud to the hammer at Farrell's, in Dublin. They were seasoned hunters for the most part, well known, and sold to the satisfaction of their owner—all save one, perhaps the pick of the basket, a thoroughly good hunter, but withal a nervous, sensitive horse. It is supposed that this horse got thoroughly cowed by the usual trials of copers for wind soundness, for just as he was about to be sold it was found that his jaw was rigid from tetanus. Some fourteen or fifteen days have elapsed since, and I have not heard that the horse has been relieved thoroughly yet. Let me here state an experience of my own in a foreign country, where

the veterinary art was still in its infancy and unsystematised. I had driven a young mare, a remarkably good goer, a long distance as tandem leader; no sooner was the bit out of her mouth than all the symptoms of idiopathic tetanus set in. Circumstances aided me. A sheep had been recently killed; I had the skin put over her loins, and kettles of almost boiling water poured over it at short intervals for hours. By morning the poor mare was relieved. I sold her, and saw her at work afterwards, but never the same high-couraged animal as before the nervous seizure.

Ireland is emphatically the island of saints. Look around its ivy-mantled ruins—they nearly all wear an ecclesiastical type. Many of the bubbling wells and springs to which the peasant matron and maid daily resort are rich in saintly story and tradition. Like the Spaniard, the Irish Celt built his temple on grand lines, before, like the Gaul, he bethought him of his theatre or his own domestic hearth; and, even while his cult was in the cold shade of semi-legal proscription, fanes of no mean architectural beauty dotted the face of the country. With this exordium let me state that all over Ireland foxes—and, I believe, hares too—had perfect repose and peace on Christmas Day. Apollyon himself, in the quick, would, I believe, have been granted an armistice on the day of universal peace and good will to mankind and our cousins the feræ.

> "He prayeth well who loveth well
> Both man, and bird, and beast,"

was the rule and legend *sans* exception, save in the case of fat oxen and double-breasted bubbly-jocks, to whom we showed our affection in a very carnal and cannibal fashion. So for forty-eight hours the music of hound and the blast of the huntsman's trumpet were not heard in Ireland; and stud grooms had an interregnum of two days to repair the exhaustion of nine or ten weeks of continuous and wearing strain, latterly intensified by the holding nature of the water-sodden ground. Two whole days without hunting! Why, the riding world, like the hero of Donnybrook

Fair, was beginning to get blue-mouldy for want of a scurry, more especially since the menace of frost and snow had passed away like the alarms of war; and this terraqueous section of the globe, after having resumed for a brief interval the nature of crust, had relapsed again into a state of crumb and pulp and gelatinism. Tuesday was the festa of St. Stephen, the proto-martyr. In John Bull's land it is boxing day; here it is "stoning" day, and bands of small boys, accompanied by some mummers, and such music as they can command, go about from house to house dancing, feasting, and collecting tribute (if they can) in reward for the slaughter of sundry wrens, whom we may suppose to be stoned to commemorate the fate of the saintly deacon. It is a holy day; for sure 'tis under the patronage of St. Stephen. It is a jolly day; for sure that mighty moon, John Jameson, who sways the tides in the affairs of men (and women) in Ireland, is under no eclipse that day. The armistice is closed; war upon fur and feather—aye, even upon the pike who infests lakes and canals—is universally proclaimed. Almost every man of able body and robust health in Ireland on that day becomes for the nonce a sportsman, and, donning the insignia of his calling, sallies out on the war path. Gunners, anglers, coursers, fox-hunters, stag-hunters, hare-hunters, all had their beats marked out for them. Looking at the hunting programme from a metropolitan club-window point of view, three lines—like Sir Robert Peel's celebrated three courses—presented themselves to the otiose hunting man to whom the deep soil and the watery ways had left a horse or two fit to take their part in the image of war. The stag-hunter met the Ward Union pack at the Flat House, whose vale was far more suggestive of otter-hunting than aught else. The Meath hounds met at Swainstown, Mr. Preston's residence, and it was well known that His Royal Highness would be in the field, as he was the guest of Colonel Fraser, V. C., at Bective, and Swainstown was very accessible by that delectable Meath line—which brings you, 'tis true, to the trysting-place in very good time, and also for the most

part in great personal safety, but takes you away (there are but two trains a day on this single line) just as an afternoon fox, ungorged and lively, is beginning to show sport: "keeping the word of (hunting) promise to the ear to break it to the hope." *Non tali auxilio.* No indeed! one or two such experiences suffice for a season. Certainly not, while Naas and the Great Southern and Western line offer a better exodus and a more convenient time for retiring from the fray. The Kildare hounds were to meet at Naas that day. Swainstown and the Flat House ought to dispose of many redundant men and horses. Let the glass of fashion and the mould of form repair to Swainstown to witch the world with noble horsemanship, and to display the recentest triumphs of Saville-row and St. James's-street. I will repair to modest Naas and its sporting brotherhood—peradventure sport will be propitious to our minority. Yes, it was a minority compared to the legions whom "Naas" on Mr. Gray's correct card usually draws to this sporting vortex; one saw this at once at King's Bridge Terminus, where not more than a dozen horse boxes were requisitioned for the day's use from garrison, court, and city. Let us pass over that slow procession to Sallins, near which town it is easy and grievous to see the most attractive flying fences in the vale margined by wire. The most salient feature on the route was a green and gold band of musicians, the last phantom of Fenianism, which hopes *ære ciere viros martemque accendere cantu.* Naas was comparatively empty at eleven o'clock, when we reached it; but for this one of the most bitterly cold days that this year has evoked must be mainly responsible, for horses had to be kept moving fast or in their stables, while every one stuck to his ingle nook on such a morning till the very last instant. Five minutes past eleven, and then came the hounds; Will Freeman and his *aide-de-camps* all wearing that look of achievement and content which a very successful half season has fully warranted; and now the streets are beginning to fill, and horses are pulled out of their stalls and boxes! Among those whom fashion and novelty had

not drawn away from Kildare and its hunting grounds were Lord Clonmell, the Hon. T. Scott, Mr. W. Forbes, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, the Hon. Major Lawless, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, the Baron de Robeck, Colonel Forster, Captain Wakefield, R. N., Lord Oranmore, Mr. and Mrs. More O'Farrell, General Seymour, Captain Ward Bennett, Mr. Roberts, Captain Beresford, a detachment of the 7th Dragoons and the Royal and Horse Artillery from Newbridge, etc.; Captains Trench and Mansfield, General and Captain Irwin, Mr. Charles Hamilton, Captain de Montmorency, Captain Gresson, Mr. Percy and Lady Annette La Touche, Captain R. Barton, Captain Fortescue Tynte, Mr. and Miss Moore, Mr. Linde, and Mr. Beasley (on Montgomery II.), the Misses Kennedy and Owen, Miss O'Kelly, and Mr. Thunder, with a good many more leal men and true, loyal to their hunt and their own hunting grounds.

It *was* a bitter forenoon. The wind was easterly, the glass ascending; but the slopes of the eastern hills were snow-flecked. Portentous clouds, charged with rain or snow, hung over our heads, and it became only a question of what shape the fall would take when the half gale which was blowing in full blast began to mitigate its violence. No morning to make fine speeches about the compliments of the season, or invoke everything good for the coming year. Mr. Mansfield rattled us off at the double to Eadestown Gorse by the well-known Punchestown track. The irony of fate or circumstance willed it that our line should be cast over breezy acclivities to-day; and, though a fox did not detain us more than ten minutes or a quarter of an hour in the tiny gorse, it seemed an interminable space of cold, dreary duration. Away he goes; away we go, jammed in a gate; then careering over a plough and a well-trodden gap, then emerging into grass, where the pack checks at the road. Our fox has been headed (small wonder, when the place is all but encircled), and is gone back. Another twenty minutes, even drearier than the last, and then we are in motion again. The fox's first impulse was Punches-

town; now it is Elverstown or Downshire Park. Either would do for a fair gallop; but no fox would face the gale for two minutes unless he had a great start, nor does ours; so, sinking the wind, he runs parallel to the gorse and the Rathmore road, then sweeping over some very fine pasture land, he holds on over the Blessington road—where a very narrow, newly made bank brings a well-known chaser and a good welter-weight to grief—crosses the wide grassy acres of Newtown Farm, and is supposed to have gone to Forenaghts Woods. But hounds hardly hunted a yard beyond Newtown pastures, and my theory is that our fox doubled up a hedgerow, tried the well-known earths and got back to Eadestown. Be that as it may, we gave him up, and went to another eminence, which overlooks Arthurstown Gorse, and then huddled under banks and thorns to avoid the cutting sting of the east wind. Presently the horn informed those capable of hearing that our search was vain. The storm of rain now began to descend: a stampede homewards was the almost universal instinct. A council of the chase convened for the occasion decided (wisely I think) that to draw Punchestown Gorse in such weather was not advantageous to Kildare's best hunting interests. So ends the story of St. Stephen's Day in Kildare as I saw it and felt it. Even a short gallop was a pleasure. I have said nothing of the performance of men and horses in that short spin, and yet it was not wholly devoid of episode and incident. Empty saddles were to be seen. One of our best light-weights broke two stirrup leathers starting in this run, and had a narrow escape of a heavy fall. The Hon. Mrs. Candy, who was riding a new four-year-old, had the great satisfaction of finding out that her mount was as clever in performance as he was taking in appearance. Those who elected Naas in preference to Swainstown were right, I find, according to the issue; for, meagre as the sport was in Kildare, it was even more jejune in Meath, seeing that Swainstown and Kilcarty Gorses were foxless to-day, and some park-hunting round Dunsany was, I believe, the entire outcome of the long-expected

day. By-the-by, what is a good run? I may give my notion on that subject by-and-by; but when I see your generally well-informed and accurate sporting contemporary actually crediting the Osberstown fox (kennel meet, Kildare) with *a good run* when the brute never went four fields from his gorse, I am beginning to think that definition is necessary before adjectives can be freely used.

On Wednesday, the 28th, the Ward Union hounds were due at Dunboyne village at one o'clock, and, as this village is full of hunters just now, I conceived that in all probability there would be a very large meet there, seeing that it is not much more than eight miles (Irish) from the metropolis, with a railway station close by. My anticipations of a large company were erroneous. The field was most moderate in extent, and the Garrison was almost wholly unrepresented at the assembly. A dark, sombre, foggy forenoon; by one o'clock a thin rain began to descend, which, like Fame, gained volume in its progress (*vires acquirit eundo*), and by twenty minutes past it descended in sluices, but only lasting long enough to soak every one pretty thoroughly. Before two the storm was over, and we were careering after a deer enlarged by Baytown Park. First, we had a little ring by way of preliminary, then a wide one, which introduced us to several brooks (where Mr. A. Macneil's chestnut horse showed very good form), and to an array of large, repulsive fences between Baytown and Ballymacoll, which required a good hunter's stretch; then followed the capture at a point near Vesington. The day being still young, a second deer was enlarged not far from the scene of the capture of the first; and if it did not run very far, it ran over a fine sound line, well brooked also, by Crookstown, on to Batterstown, where it was secured, Captain Candy, who got very well away, taking a leading part in the performance. The Hon. Mrs. Candy was riding one of the nicest chesnut horses I have ever seen a lady on, and equal, I hear, to any and every country.

I alluded just now to the diversity of opinion existing about

runs, and the application of qualifying adjectives. Of the following outline of a run—I give the mere skeleton—there will be very little divergence of opinion, I fancy. The date was the 22nd inst., the meeting place Moncoin, the pack the Curraghmore. Mount Neil, first drawn, was empty. A fox, however, turned up in a small plantation on the Curraghmore side of Mount Neil. He ran through the covert and pointed for Granny, where some quarries had ere this saved him opportunely. They were closed now; so he held on for Dunkit, where there was a slight check; but Duke hit off the line directly. It led over the railway and across the Blackwater by the bridge, thence right through Bishop's Hall, and straight into Tory Hill, where, with the hounds a field behind him, he got a refuge among inaccessible rocks. The distance from Mount Neil to the finish, as the crow flies, is over nine English miles; as the fox travelled it was about fourteen, and very straight, all over grass. The time taken was one hour and thirty minutes, and the field had dwindled down to eight or nine, including the huntsman and first whip, the Marquis of Waterford, a welter-weight, on Long John, and a couple of ladies who rode the gallop admirably. Needless to say, scent was breast high nearly all through; but the fact is, the Curraghmore hounds have had very little baffling scent this season; hence, combined with their stout foxes, the grand sport they have shown up to date.

Friday, the 22nd, was also a white-stone day in Western Meath, my authority being a Leicestershire man, who was full of the sport, the servants and their mounts, and, in fine, of the *tout ensemble*. On this date they met at Delvin, and, finding at South Hill, ran their fox through Rosmeade Park (Lord Vaux's) to Ballinlough (Sir C. Nugent's), and here there was a short check. Then the chase led on towards Heathstown, to Mount Nelson, and thence to Drewstown, which is Meath territory, and consequently stopped: one hour and a quarter by the *un*stopped watch. Among the leaders in this gallop were the Hon. Mrs. Malone, General the Hon. Curzon Smythe, and Captain Candy. A second fox was

found in Rosmeade, who got into a rabbit-hole; but when the pack were drawn off he came out, and was hunted into Ballinlough. South Hill produced a third fox, who was hunted as long as light lasted, when every one turned in to a late luncheon.

Saturday's run from Archerstown with the Meath hounds was described to me as very good; but the riding, by all accounts, was neither pleasant nor very safe. Kilgar and Clonabraney also furnished their quota of good foxes that day. Wednesday, the 20th, was another good day in Westmeath; they found a good fox in Irishtown Gorse, who took them by Ballinacargy and Fay Mount to Rathconrath, where he got into a cave. The time well-nigh sixty minutes, the line grass, the pace good, interrupted but by a single check.

Friday, the 22nd again! The scene is now laid in Wexford, where the hounds met at Wilton. Let us hurry on to "the Master's Gorse," which, as usual, is full. Forty minutes' ring with one; then the hounds change to a fresh one, and race him towards Rossdroit, then through Mr. Hope's large grass farm, over Balladeen, through Ballinavary, across the river Boro at the Flax Mills, through Craan, and into the Turret Grove on Carrighill. Here the bitches were halloaed on to a fresh fox, whom they raced over Davidstown by the back of the chapel, through Moneybore, through Rossdroit Wood, over the hill as if he meant to try Lord Carew's coverts at Castleboro'; but, swinging to the left, he swept through Moneytucker and Ballybane, winning his way back to the Turret Grove (the last eight miles occupied an hour); in vain, however, for he was rolled over at ten minutes to four o'clock, the hounds having been continuously hunting for three hours and twenty-five minutes, and part of the time running very fast. Every hound, I hear, was up at the finish.

The Kildare hounds had a good day's sport on Thursday last, to which I think I hardly made allusion. The meet was at Tinorin cross-roads. The Hill Gorse held a fox, but he was killed in covert. Ballyhook was blank; but Whitestown held a

tenant, who ran towards Stratford, then turning over a swampy sort of morass, strongly banked, which emptied a good saddle or two, he ran back by Wine Tavern to his starting-point, and got to ground somehow, after a very enjoyable twenty-six or twenty-seven minutes. Copelands held a fox, who ran *viâ* Merganstown to Whitestown also, and could not be dislodged. Sleet and snow showers coming on caused a dispersion homewards, many of the Carlow quota having long rides back, and they were in force to-day—among them the Messrs. Bunbury, Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Duckett, Mr. Beauchamp Bagenal, and Captain Tanner.

The week, now closing in storm and tempest, has not been rich in sport. Hounds blown home; meets rendered impossible from weather considerations; a race fixture postponed, not from frost and snow, but from rain and deluge—such have been our chief weather characteristics.

I find I was somewhat premature in denouncing the week of storm and rain as barren of sport. While we were enjoying ourselves on Wednesday last with a couple of short-running deer in the deep Dunboyne country, the Meath hounds had one of their brightest days from Beau Parc, Mr. Gustavus Lambart's beautiful residence by the Boyne Water. I should say the fun began from Beau Parc, which was the scene of the meet; but it was Slater's Gorse that furnished the best morning fox, who gave the pack a capital half-hour, though not continuously straight, the run ending near Lismullen. His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, who had been staying at Bective, the guest of Colonel Fraser, was in the field, and saw this portion of the day's sport. Some military function in Dublin prevented his witnessing the concluding part of the day's programme, which turned out exceptionally good and brilliant, a straight-necked fox, found at Lismullen, taking the pack along fast over a beautiful, sound line of grass by the Castle of Screen, past Corbalton into the Reisk, nearly an eight-mile point. The following day was very good in both Kildare and Meath, Cryhelp furnishing a good fox and good

sound upland grass in the former, while the Meath hounds began with a hunting run from Allenstown (the master's park), and wound up with a very enjoyable forty minutes from Rathmore *viâ* Gilston to Allenstown.

On Friday the same pack met at Trim, in rain so soaking that I saw one of the best of their light-weights turn homewards. From Trimlestown Gorse they had a very wide ring, at capital sustained space; another departure from the same gorse after a short delay, then a recapitulation of the first couple of miles of the run, and a subsequent bend towards New Haggard, near which point I believe they failed to account for their quarry—a very good day's sport, though severe on horses, and not too pleasant for the human race. In the Queen's County Mr. Hamilton Stubber was at Timogue on Wednesday; found foxes abounding everywhere, but defective earth-stopping spoilt what might have proved a very good day—this part of his territory riding comparatively light and springy still.

Your contemporary (the *Saturday Review*), I see, has told us in his wise caustic way that we hunt too much. Was it in deference to his pandect, or in consideration of a limited liability stable, that I forbore from pursuit on Thursday, and so lost a good day in either Kildare or Meath? If this weather lasts, we shall all perforce subscribe to some of his doctrinaire views.

The recent death of Mr. French, of Ardsallagh, in the County Meath, has put many families in mourning, and caused wide gaps in the hunting array. His death was the result of a kick from a young horse in the hunting-field, on the occasion of the Meath hounds meeting at Dunshaughlin, some five or six weeks ago. He was a good sportsman, a staunch preserver of foxes in his extensive coverts, and entered all his family to the royal sport early. Your columns recorded last summer the sad yachting disaster by which Mr. French lost his son, and many a friend and companion.

"Multis ille bonis flebilis occidit."

Mr. French's death stops the Louth hounds for a week; Mr. Filgate, their master, being his son-in-law. Hunting has this season been fearfully prodigal of life and limb in men and horses.

Let me finish the year's hunting in this letter—I mean that modest portion thereof that comes within my power of seeing and hearing. Saturday, the 30th December, the last hunting day in Ireland, England, and Scotland, of 1876, was, so far as Kildare went—and with that pack I throw in my lot—anything but a red-letter epoch. *Il pluit averse* was the only way to describe the torrents of the morning up to 10.30 a.m., to which succeeded a clear warm afternoon, whose fineness and serenity were only broken by a single shower. Belgard Gorse was the first draw. The last time we were there was in fog; a clear sky did not improve the position, for the hounds were inside a park wall. The field, if like good boys they did what the master told them, were half-bogged in a bit of heavy, soaked plough outside. There, with one or two false starts, to diversify proceedings, we stayed for an hour or more. At last we heard or saw, by such semaphores as hats raised a long distance off, that the fox had broken and gone away. When we emerged into grass-land from plough, the leaders were half a mile in front, the rear rank half a mile behind the middle division. Our fox ran to a small plantation near Tallaght Covert; then, wholly unpressed, wandered back towards Belgard, turned to the right, and got safely to the green hills by Castle Tymon ruins. Castlebagot and its gorse were foxless to-day, and this is all I can say of a bad day's sport and a large field up to 3.30 or so p.m. There was lots of fencing, big and little, brook jumping, tumbling, and all that to many constitutes the fun of the fair. Thursday last in Kildare, and its three runs from Cryhelp, Hatfield, and Moorhill, was a contrast to this lymphatic day. I may recur to it by-and-by, if time permits.

While we were having a good day near Trim with the Meath hounds, the stag-hounds (Ward Union) had by all accounts even

a better. It was a by-day—not much bruited about, so the field was most select. The object was the capture of "London," the outlaw, and it was effected after a chase of three hours and fifteen minutes; but the poor beast had had too much, and grass feeding told its tale, for he died soon afterwards.

Mr. Maxwell's harriers had also a brilliant run with a hare over the Fairy House course, three miles, at top speed.

XIII.

"This castle hath a pleasant seat: the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses."

Trim—Trimlestown and Lord Langford—Cryhelp—Westmeath—Water-jumping—Kilkenny—Kildare, etc.

"In Troy there lies the scene," says the poet of all time. For Troy, we must this time read Trim; not so storied, perhaps, as the mighty Ilium which is now disclosing its treasures to the archæologist, but still very ancient, very historic; the scene of much fierce debate with sword and tongue (for the Irish Parliament was held here at one time, and its sieges are past counting); very ecclesiastical (for, if tradition be reliable, St. Patrick, earliest of nepotists, planted one nephew as abbot or bishop in Trim, while another overlooked his clerical flock in the neighbouring Dunshaughlin). What is far more to our purpose is the fact that it is commanded by a branch of the Meath line, and therefore very accessible *once or twice* a day from the metropolis; that it has a good hotel and hunting stables; and that it is in the heart of a splendid hunting district. Trim to me always suggests the corporal, whom Sterne has made coeval with the English tongue; but a greater than Corporal Trim stands on that fine Corinthian column as you enter the town—even the great Duke of Wellington, who was born close by, at Dangan Castle, who represented the borough of Trim while it existed, and who probably, we imagine,

during his holidays, learnt in the neighbouring fields those lessons of venerie which stood him in such good stead during the tedium of the Peninsular warfare, and during the allied occupation of France. Few towns in Ireland are richer in castellated fragments than Trim, one tower being the highest of the sort I can remember; and one cannot help thinking that in the days of bows and cloth-yard shafts the besiegers must have had far the best of the shooting, for the warriors on its airy parapets must have presented a very small mark indeed to the bowmen of Cressy and Poictiers. By the way, Henry V. of England was imprisoned in one of these towers by order of Richard II.

But we wax historic. What says the proverb about a live jackass being better than a dead lion? So, failing the lion, let us come to the fox and his haunt. First passing over the old bridge through which the mighty Boyne in majestic flood is hurrying on to Drogheda and the sea, in some two miles or so on the northern bank of the Boyne, after passing some splendid mills, we come to a green-swarded lane, nearly a mile long, which has evidently been an avenue to yonder ruined pile of 16th-century style, with embattled towers and projecting windows, whence once the lords of Trimlestown surveyed their ancestral domains. Two or three large grass fields will bring you to a low-lying snug gorse, very secluded, where I should think foxes were rarely absent. Nor was it unoccupied to-day. How many harboured there I know not. One breaks away over what looks a beautiful grass line, though the Boyne would cut it short, if he preserved in a straight, after a mile or so. Not knowing the topography, I could not say what covert the fox pointed for—perhaps New Haggard would be a promising venture—but very soon he bent to the right, crossed the green lane I referred to, and swept down by the old pile I spoke of a few sentences back. Here one of the Boyne's tributaries, usually a modest rivulet, flowed down in full spate as turbid as the Tiber. There is one inviting-looking spot only there, and some rails of unknown stiffness at the far side. Lord Langford,

who was riding a very smart four-year-old—a Blood Royal, I fancy, and big of heart as that race prove themselves—plunges in, swims against the barrier, and fortunately breaks it away. Mr. Purdon follows him. We, the *polloi*, had the most cogent reason for declining the bold lead. Not that we were dry; those who, like myself, had ridden well-nigh twenty miles hither, had little to boast of in that respect, for the day was one long down-pour—clatter and patter, the former representing the horse, the latter the dropping rain. But we were, one and all, struck with hydrophobia most virulently. So, coasting along the river-side, we came to a bridge, while the hounds ran to us by a farm-house; so that our pusillanimity or caution was actually rewarded. Now, I hear, we are going towards Kildalkey. I hope so, for the sake of the geographical unities. At any rate, I can see for myself that we are going towards the regions of the setting sun, and perhaps, if the hounds hold on, we may find ourselves by-and-by at Mullingar. The outlook now is over rather swampy grass fields—not bad riding at all, but very widely ditched, where the hesitators often remain on the wrong side; but a turn to the left brings us quickly to small inclosures, an odd bit of malignant holding plough, three or four doubles, and singles of extra size. In a few minutes more hounds have checked by a farmstead (Mr. Potterton's, I believe), but the fox has run down a hedgerow, and in a minute they are off again and crossing the Trim road, running by a small plantation, and then getting into an area of low-lying pastures, drained by deep brooks. Another inclination to the right, and we are face to face with one of these rhenes. Mr. Peter Murphy, on a very smart four-year-old colt, by The Coroner from Prima Donna, gives us a good lead, and most get over, though the last thing I saw was a sportsman on the bank, pulling at a bridle which belonged to an engulfed steed. Now we are on the Trimlestown brook again, where Lord Langford had his swim forty or fifty minutes ago. What an advantage it was to be a stranger in the land, the waving line seems so straight! Our next step is to the original gorse, and

here we had a pause of perhaps ten minutes or twelve, and these we may utilize to take some stock of the surroundings. Among the strangers or visitors are Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, who rode yesterday in Kildare, or rather in the Wicklow side of the Kildare country, over a line the very antithesis of what we have now crossed (Mrs. Candy's young bay mare of to-day is a very promising one indeed), General the Hon. L. Curzon Smythe, Lord Rossmore, and M. C. Macdonald Morton. Three sportsmen who have occupied the "sick bay," as the sailors term it, for some time, are out again, and full of ride as usual—the Earl of Howth, Colonel Fraser, V.C., and Mr. Trotter. Among the lighter weights, the Hon. Captain Rowley on his good grey, Captain R. Low on the Crow, Captains Crosbie and Fitzgerald, and the Messrs Murphy have been very well carried near the pack, and so has young Mr. Trotter; the Hon. H. Bourke, Mr. Hanley, Mr. Barnewell, and Mr. Dunne have been revelling in the big fences. But our fox is off again, and in a mile or so (a repetition of the morning line) we are once more at the original bathing-place. The line then leads through Mooretown towards New Haggard, and I hear in twenty minutes or twenty-five the fox was lost. As every boot was now full of water, every coat saturated, and horses, after carrying many pounds of liquid measure beyond their proper burdens, and over deep land, must have had well-nigh enough, I fancy a general dispersion took place. I did not await it, trotting homewards (a big trot it was) so soon as I reached the highway to Trim. Saturday in Kildare was more remarkable for the size of the field than the quality of the sport. I think I alluded to it in my last letter.

It is a pleasant thing to find hunting men returning to their old hunting grounds even after a long interval. Lord Oranmore has located a very strong stud at Johnstown for the Kildare hounds; and I hear Captain Boulderson's horses (17th Lancers) will soon help to fill the neighbouring stables. Mr. Dundas is, I think, the recentest arrival in the county Meath, where he has

made Kilcarty his hunting quarters. Proselytes are pouring in, but there is room for all, even in Dunboyne, Dunshauglin, and Ratoath, while Naas and Sallins have still a few vacancies. With Saturday the hunting chronicle for the expiring 1876 ought, properly speaking, to close. There are, however, one or two recent rubrical days, which time and space force me to slur over at the moment of writing, that may now be recurred to with advantage. Before doing so, let me illustrate the present condition of hunting Ireland by two pregnant facts within my own experience. Glancing over the fixtures for early January, my eye caught "The Club House, Kilkenny, for Monday, at eleven." I telegraphed to a friend on the spot on Saturday night; his answer was not reassuring—country much flooded, or words to that effect—by which I gathered that the Nore and its tributaries had been overflowing their banks, and that the valleys beside them were unridable. Now, Kilkenny is some eighty miles from Dublin, and the only railway facility for reaching that sporting city is a train that, starting from Kingsbridge terminus at 9 something a.m., lands you on the outskirts of Kilkenny at 11.40, and virtually, if very punctual, brings you to the meeting-place at or about noon. Now, the prospect of catching hounds an hour after they had left the tryst—and then, perhaps, see them enacting the part of otter-hounds rather than fox-hounds—was not inviting enough, even with one's imagination fired by the accounts of brilliant sport which the pack has been showing this season; so the eye, sent wandering again over hunting programmes, rests delightedly on the Ward Union stag-hounds at Culmullen cross-roads on Monday, the 1st, at 1 p.m. Now, a heart that is humble might find happiness here. Culmullen is celebrated as a fox covert—celebrated, too, for the runs which the stags have given when started from its gentle undulations. Standing on high, sound land, moreover, it is comparatively free from the surrounding plague of water. Culmullen for me, then! A hunting we will go! Alas! the post, which reached me just when I ought

to be preparing to start, brought the unwelcome tidings that the Ward Union authorities had determined to forego, not only this charming meet, but all others, till dry weather returned. I am not astonished, only disappointed. The Ward Union area is not a very large one; it is for the most part a rich grassy basin, much affected by flood and rain, and the process of kneading this soft stuff three times a week cannot be beneficial to the farming interests. Of course the decision is a just and right one, though I wish it had taken effect for the first time on Wednesday next instead of New Year's Day.

"Turn we now" (as the chronicler in that most charming book of fable, the "Morte d'Arthur," continually suggests) to Kildare and its hounds at Dunlavin on Thursday last, premising first of all that this thriving inland town is the capital of a fine upland region of grass, many feet above the sea, and most unaffected by the recent deluging influences. Carlow men very often swell the fields at this place. The Queen's County, too, sends her quota occasionally, while Newbridge and the Curragh send their best-mounted representatives there, for the banks in the whole of this region require a well-educated handy horse, with a leg to spare and some quickness of eye. The weather, strange to narrate, was very fine; and now the cavalcade is trotting off to Cryhelp Gorse, the Baron de Robeck's property—needless to say, always full of foxes, and foxes generally of a stout, long-running caste. The find was very quick, and the usual rush followed to the small gate, which gives egress when the fox—as on the present occasion—heads Copelandwards. He did not persevere on this line, but, inclining to the left, seemed bound for the mountains, a few miles eastwards; but, holding on still to the left, he kept above and parallel to a bit of boggy land which runs in here; then crossed the Dunlavin road, by what used to be the Cryhelp School-house, and seemed in full swing for Lemonstown Moat. Headed here most probably, he turned towards Cryhelp again; but, finding a vacancy in

the borough of Tober, he filled it, and was not disturbed by petition or anything else from the seat. The time was nearly forty minutes; the run extremely fast and almost unchecked throughout. Mr. Burke, of the 7th Dragoon Guards, got well away through the gate I referred to, and held his place throughout; so did Mr. Brunskill, of the 4th Foot, on that admirable hunter, Sportsman, who seems as good this season as he was last year; and Mr. H. de Robeck sent his bay mare along in a style worthy of his father the Baron. Dirty coats and crushed hats bore witness to rotten banks and unexpected ditches. Mr. Brunskill lost his hat in the gallop, but the pace was too good, and his place too good, to give it a thought. I hear Dunlavin and its hatters were equal to the emergency.

The Bowery Gorse has become light and hollow below, and did not hold a fox to-day; but Hatfield, drawn last week, was ready with foxes in duplicate and triplicate. Two ran nearly the same line, and rather spoilt a run which began towards Halverstown; next crossed Mr. Kilbee's large pastures towards Dunlavin; then, winding through Logatrina, ended at Tober, where the fox or foxes were given up.

Moorhill Glen was next drawn, and the hounds were presently seen streaming on for Branoxtown; next crossing the park wall of Harristown, and racing over that wide extent of grass known as Rochestown, they sent their fox into the blackthorns (where he was joined by sundry other foxes; but there is no reason to suppose a change was made there); through the covert, through the lands of Geganstown, and Ardenode, and Mount Cashel; thence over the Ballymore Eustace road, as if the still distant Hollywood was his aim; but, whether headed or finding his power failing, our fox now crossed the large pastures which lead into Moorehill, and here there was a slight check. This allowed him to steal away towards Branoxtown, and get into a sewer. The Kildare bitches were sailing along in this forty-five minutes at about their best pace, starting on good terms with their fox,

and pressing him very hard. The pace required good speed and condition in hunters to keep anywhere nigh them, even in the earlier stages—the hesitation on the return to Moorehill being about the only check or pause in the circuit.

Thursday, the 28th, was also a capital day in Westmeath, producing certainly one of the finest runs of the season. The county pack met at Mosstown, and drew the old stick covert blank. In the new one there was a tenant, but he was very hard to dislodge; in the mean time, news came of a fox who had just jumped out of a hedgerow. The hounds were put on, but nothing good resulted from it. Crieve was next visited, and, strange to say, found empty. The hill covert of Middleton, however, produced a good fox, who started at once, with the pack near him, in the direction of Ballynagore, which point he did not reach; for, turning to the left, he made Ballinwire, and thence ran close to the town of Kilbeggan, where he turned short to the right, and saved himself in a drain. It was a very sharp fifty-eight minutes over a good country, the hounds doing their work by themselves, for they had beaten off the field, which in this neighbourhood is composed of hard-riding elements. A lady, Miss Daniel, met with a sad accident in the pursuit, as her horse rolled over her, broke her leg, and dislocated her shoulder, not to speak of bruises. She is, I rejoice to hear, going on very well so far. Their next day was at New Forest, which held a fox who was lost without much sport, and the rest of the day was wholly uneventful.

I have just heard of a proprietor whose coverts are always open to foxes, as well as to a large head of game, who did an act last week, which, I think, most hunting men will say was worthy of general imitation. The county hounds, on drawing his covert, found, 'tis true, but only a fox caught in a trap. The lord of the manor instantly sent for the gentlemen who walk about in velveteen attire and siller ha'e to spare (aye, and gold and notes in battue time, I fancy), and then and there gave them their *congé*.

Would that my sense of probability allowed me to transfer to your columns some magnificent hunting episodes I read of in the dailies. Here, in one journal, is a pack of harriers (a right good pack they are, too) hunting an outlying fox "at least nine miles." "There was not a check *from find to finish*," the fox, when he got to ground, "being viewed not more than the length of his brush before the leading hound." In the same I read of a chase beginning between one and two p.m., lasting four hours and a half, while the hounds *viewed* their noble game a mile before they took him. Certainly, there is a moon just now; but really! How many hours did Falstaff fight? The real fact being that the magnificent run alluded to lasted three hours and twenty minutes. I shall give a sketch of it by-and-by.

While making these observations in the bitterness and disappointment of my spirit, lo! "Through the hush'd air the whitening shower descends." By morning light there was a very fair sprinkling of snow over the face of nature. It was freezing, too; but before nine o'clock a strong sun was clearing the roads, while the well-watered fields were absorbing much of the snowfall. Sommerville, the appointed place for the Meath hounds, is a long way off, but, certes, 'tis well worth an expedition. I noticed the more salient features of this fine well-wooded, well-watered park, and the aspect of the country around it, so recently in one of my letters, that I may pass them by now. The drip from the trees caused by the thawing snow, probably banished foxes from Sommerville woodlands. Walsh's Gorse, close by, almost abutting on the park, was tenanted, and I hear its fox is a small compact one, quite a celebrity, who trusts to his pace and dash, and doesn't mean to allow his mask or pads to grace the Meath kennel doors. He has given capital gallops, but has never yet been in imminent danger; perhaps he had rather a bad quarter of an hour to-day, but still the result was the same. I think it was high noon when the hounds sang their pæan of trouvaille in Walshe's Gorse. A quick find it was, very little coquetting

or feinting round the strong gorse, and away he goes towards Sommerville and the land of mills, brooks, drains, and water meadows. The line is much the same as the last time I visited these parts, when his Royal Highness was in the hunting field. After about a couple of miles, Athcarne Castle, a modernized square old keep, is reached. Then the line is over water meadows, somewhat, I imagine, of the nature and consistency of oriental paddy fields: the fences are banks and brooks, brooks and banks, for every ditch is now become, for the time being, a rivulet. The biggest of these water-ways is "the Hurley," where Mr. Dunville lost a very good mare last year. Hounds are racing with a scent which such atmospheric conditions as to-day's, plus well-watered and recently flooded grass fields, are sure to contribute (a noble master of hounds told me he never saw the pack go faster than to-day); horses are still fresh, for they have not been going more than twenty-five minutes, if so much, and the fences have not been very recurrent; but the grief was considerable, the absorption of muddy water great. We are now inclining towards a hill (one of the chain to which Garristown, Primatestown, and Kilmoon belong), Hawksley, or Hawksworth, I think 'tis called—a very gentle elevation, rising out of the surrounding flat basin, as the hand pivot out of the flat watch dial. Men are settling into their places for a good thing, when a check occurs near a farm-house; the fox has stopped, and run his foil. For a field or two the hounds pick up the broken thread and tell us the news in the joyfullest notes; but the fields are now stained to a degree; our quarry knows the use of a brook in baffling hounds and their huntsman. After nearly half a mile retrogade over brookland, we have to give it up. Now let us get to the road the best way we can. More brooks in cold blood, with banks more than ever rotten and broken and crumbled. But they must be got over, unless you mean to dine *à la belle étoile* on watercresses and such Lenten fare, and all faced their perils most gaily, I must say. Talk of the democracy of hunting!

Here is the greater democracy of bathing (in costume). There in one ditch, a padre and a horse-breaker may be seen wallowing together; Lords, Commons, and medicine in an adjoining one! Presently, I see a manly form taking off his coat and shaking it—I suppose, to clear the pockets. The ladies' horses behaved very well. I did not see a single immersion, and not a few were out to-day.

The cavalcade is now reunited on the road; we can take stock of our party. Mrs. Dunville has had a capital survey of the water party from her hunting phaeton, which to-day holds an extra passenger—one of the neatest fox-terriers I ever saw. Louth, whose hunting list has been temporarily cancelled from the melancholy cause I referred to, is in great force; among her daughters being Mrs. Osborne, the Misses Gradwell (three), and Messrs. Jameson, Tiernan, M'Naughten, Pepper, Osborne, and many more of the followers of Mr. Filgate's musicians. Among the visitors are the Earl of Howth, Mr. Trotter, Mr. Dunville, Lord Algernon Lennox, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Colonel Fraser, V.C., Lord Rossmore, the Hon. H. Bourke (though he belongs to Meath), Captain Low, the Messrs. Hone, Captain C. Ponsonby, Mr. and Miss Coleridge. Dublin and its Garrison were, I think, wholly unrepresented, and, strange to say, the Ward Union men sent very few champions to the white list to-day. We are now *en route* for Corballis Gorse—a strong one still, though half has been cut down. The find was quick, the exodus quick also. Scent seemed very good, for the hounds got well ahead of their followers in a few fields, but the race was most uneventful. A series of gaps in half-a-dozen fields led us into Corbalton Park; then succeeded a game of hide-and-seek in plantations and shrubberies by the avenue, at which the fox got worsted, for in a few minutes, I think, as I was starting homewards, I heard the who-whoop for five or six minutes seemingly inevitable. Lismullen, I hear, produced a third fox, who was taken into Dowdstown at good pace, but the pack were here

stopped. Mr. S. Garnett, I grieve to hear, met with rather a severe accident from a collision. As we were riding to the latter gorse my attention was called to some wire stretched along a boundary fence by the road side (not treacherous wire run through thorns, or hanging from tree to tree, but with its legitimate supports of posts); on either side telegraph posts had been erected, in one case to show where the wire ceased and the fence was open to jump; in the other, to indicate a set of sliding posts and rails, through which a hunt might pass with very little trouble or delay. The story goes that the present owner of the property had lost two good runs by the wire barrier, and that when he came into possession he talked about it to the farmer in occupation, Mr. Cassidy, who promptly carried out his ideas in the efficient manner I have described, or attempted to describe. Wire is comparatively rare in Dublin and Meath; but I do know one farm in the Ward Union country where wire has been suspended from posts, or rather run through posts on either side of the road, the posts standing on the banks—the original barrier. Now the posts have given way in most cases, and the wire is hanging in a limp sort of fashion half way down the bank, where many a well-trained hunter would plant his fore feet before springing. The wire has ceased to be of much avail as a fence; as a snare, it is capable of any amount of mischief. I mention this circumstance in the hope that Mr. Dunville's (for he is the landlord) happy notions may be carried out here by the occupier. I saw myself a very narrow escape from an accident at the same fence. There is a considerable drop into the road, and broken knees and broken necks seem not unlikely results from a turn over—*horresco referens!* There were a few very nice young horses out to-day. Mr. Morris was on a very neat mare by the Knave of Hearts, Mr. Saurin rode a thoroughbred, a son of Kingsley's (by King Tom). I hear this pack killed a fox in a most patient and persevering manner yesterday, running and walking for nearly two hours; the find in Clonabraney.

I alluded in my last letter to a very remarkable run, in which the outlaw deer London was taken. Let me now supply the particulars. The date was Friday, the 29th ult., when Mr. Turbitt, accompanied by Messrs. Hone, O'Reilly, Murland, D'Arcy, Wilson, and Jem Brindley, the whip, went forth in quest of the truant with nine and a half couple of hounds, of whom four couples were from Mr. Turbitt's pack of drag-hounds. I should add that Mr. Turbitt held the horn in the absence of Charley Brindley. At 12.45 they found their quarry in Knockcommon Wood; his course lay through Loughlinstown, by Slater's Gorse, to the hill of the rock into Somerville, where he jumped the park wall 7ft. high, thence along the river to Balrath police barracks; and here, after a very quick burst of twenty-seven minutes, came a check. The line was hit off again in Ballymagarney Wood, and it led on through Irishtown, Temorn, to White's Cross, by Garlinstoun, to the commons of Duleek, by the Lough of Clonlusk, to Sodstown, and here the deer was safely taken in the river, at 4.5 p.m., but died presently of exhaustion, stiffening like a fox. All I hear went well; but Mr. J. Hone, Mr. Wilson on a four-year-old, half-brother to Umpire, Mr. O'Reilly on his old chestnut, and Jem Brindley on Safety, alone saw the finish. Only one couple of hounds was wanting at the capture.

Wednesday was a *dies non* so far as hunting in Meath was concerned. A south-easter, laden with a vast amount of water, swept over the eastern shores of Ireland, involving the almost total suspension of traffic by rail and road, and flooding everything within reach of its influence. The Meath hounds came to Clifton Lodge; but hunting under such conditions was a *mauvaise plaisanterie* of which no one seemed ambitious; so the surrounding foxes had a week or ten days' respite. Whether the violence of the rainstorm in Kildare was partially broken by the eastern barrier of the Dublin and Wicklow Hills I know not. At any rate, the usual select party went down from Sallins station to Athy with the dog pack, found no weather to mar (much less veto) hunting, and,

as a reward for their adventure, had a very satisfactory afternoon and a fine long hunting run over a good, sound, ridable line, with the opening twenty minutes as fast as need be wished for. Avoiding the Barrow valley, the hounds first drew the moat of Ardskull Gorse; but for once this season it was foxless. Narraghmore Wood, however, the second venture, was, as usual, well stocked; and the hounds, settling to one, ran him at great pace over those pastures which the winding Greise drains, Spratstown being left on the right hand; thence over the hill ridge by Blackrath, down the narrow valley, and up to "Mat Conran's" hill snuggery, where there was a pause, but only a brief one, the track leading on over the sound grass fields to the eastward of the gorse, across the Ballitore road, and into Ballynure, Mr. Henry Carroll's park, till this stout fox found a refuge in a burrow not far from Grange. The Kildare hounds had the good fortune not only to be able to hunt on this day of storm, but to give their followers a very fine run, which could not have been much short of nine miles. All the other packs within my ken found it simply impossible to attempt hunting. The Meath hounds, as recorded, tried it and failed; the Kilkenny hounds were equally weather-baffled. In both the latter fields were men to whom weather is no personal consideration, who abound in good hunters in going trim, and yet their voices were against hunting. By-the-by, on that Monday when the telegraph warned me to turn back from Kilkenny and its hunting grounds, this pack had very fine sport, and within a few miles of the famous city itself. The morning began with a ring from Troy's Wood, where Mr. James Poe's strict preservation makes rather a small covert always a holding one. Several coverts were then drawn blank, and a number of the field rode homewards; the few who stuck to the hounds had their reward. From Sutcliffe's Gorse a good fox broke for Ballykeefe, but was turned from this point, and forced to run past Castle Blunden through Kilcreene, by Grange Wood, Dunmana, and Ballycallan, to Knockroe, where pursuers only numbered three—

Colonel Chaplin, the master, riding Shiner (whom I have often mentioned in your columns), Major Bunbury, and Captain Bunbury, of the Scots Greys. Where the hounds were stopped I cannot say; but I heard they killed in the gorse.

The same Monday brought Mr. Hamilton Stubber also a very first-class run. It began from Lennon's Gorse, and passing Moyadd and Chatsworth, led on to Castlecomer, where a flooded river stopped the fox's career for a few minutes, and when he summoned up resolution to try it again he was run into. I heard that in breaking up this fox one of the pack got choked by a bone.

Lord Waterford also had a capital Monday, killing after a fine pursuit, but particulars have not reached me yet.

On Friday, the 5th, the Meath card invited all and singular to meet the county pack at Summerhill, Lord Langford's park, to which meeting-point your readers have frequently accompanied me this season. Nature, wearied out with the tumults of the past seven or eight days, was hushed in the completest repose; a bright luminous atmosphere was lit up by a strong sun; the rushing and roaring of innumerable streams, hurrying with their watery tribute to the sea, was comparatively stilled, and much of the surface water had been absorbed during the last forty-eight hours. Altogether the outlook was very cheerful, and the day was gaudy in the extreme; there was a sting in the south-easterly wind which might lead one to expect a good scent over the well-soaked grass lands. The fine outlines of Lord Langford's handsome residence never, to my eye, showed to greater advantage than in the floods of light which enveloped it to-day, revealing every bit of its architectural symmetry, while the court-yard in front was gay with the many-coloured figures who passed and repassed the stone steps; ladies driving, ladies riding; scarlet pursuers, black-and-white pursuers; while cynosure of all who ride to hunt and not hunt to ride were the dog pack, bright of colour and bright of condition, shepherded by Goodall, J. Bishop, and young Rees; for, strangely enough, I hear the second whip in Meath and the first in West-

meath have both been temporarily disabled by kicks, and both on the same date—last Tuesday.

The inviting forenoon and the interregnum of two whole days without hunting have brought out the Meath array in great numbers and force, though Mr. S. Garnett's pleasant presence from the hunting field is not a little missed. I alluded, I think, to his accident last Tuesday evening when hunting with this pack at Lismullen; let me now state that his shoulder was put out, but, most fortunately, Colonel Fraser and one or two more of his friends slipped it into its socket then and there, so he may be expected to be in the saddle ere many days. The soldiers were represented by Captain Graves Sawle, A.D.C., Captains Wardrop and Yatman, and one or two more of the 3rd Dragoons; while among the visitors were Lords Rossmore and Algernon Lennox, Mr. C. Macdonald Morton, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, the Hon. Captain Harbord, Captain R. Barton, and Mr. Rose; and from Kildare came the Earl of Clonmell, Mr. W. Forbes, Mr. A. More O'Ferrall, Mr. Percy and Lady Annette La Touche, Lord Cloncurry, Mr. F. Rynd, Mr. Blacker, Captain Davis, etc. Summerhill, according to its wont, abounded in foxes. One was rattled about the woods for some time, taken along towards Agher, and killed. Then followed more park-hunting in Agher, some refreshing of hunting pilgrims at Summerhill, an ineffectual visit to the Bullring Gorse, less excitement than usual at the Bullring double (by the way, this may be evaded by jumping two small singles, which ain't equal to a double), and then we are once more drawn up outside Rahinstown Gorse, which we drew successfully only a few days ago. Suspense is very short here. A quick find is followed by a quick exit. The country round here is most unlike the Ward Union side of Meath; peat alternates with gravelly hills, and even the better land seems to have been moor at one time. So down we go one of these gravelly pitches, and, ascending another very sharp hill, see the pack streaming away over a bit of pasture land, carrying a head which looked as if a

fox had little chance with them to-day. In two fields more there is a road—the Enfield road, I think—over which the pack flash, throwing up their heads in a field on the far side. All in vain are forward casts; so Goodall takes them back half a field, and in a minute they are hunting away, taking the line by a bit of unreclaimed bog on through Baconstown lands, across the Enfield road, into Mr. Dillon's farm, then across another road as if Cappagh Gorse were our fox's point, when a bend to the right brings us into Ryndville; and here, knowing that the earths were open (it is a Kildare covert), I left the hounds still hunting. Had it not been for the long check at the road, this fox would have been obliged to travel very fast to reach his goal, for scent was serving and good. It was not a nice country to cross; the fences were ragged and trappy, and the inclosures small for the most part, but the land rode far lighter than might have been anticipated. I should mention that Mr. Waller declined to draw Garradice and Beltrasna Gorses to-day, owing to his wish to avoid poaching the wet grass lands around them.

The best gallop the Wexford hounds have had recently was on Thursday week, forty minutes from Dunbrody Flax Mills. The Kildare hounds ran very fast, I hear, from Elverstown to Punchestown on Tuesday; while the Westmeath hounds gave those who remained out long enough to see it a very fine run from Clonlost to Knockdrin (Sir Richard Levinge's fine park) *viâ* Clondriss and Edmonton and back again, on the evening of the same day.

The Kildare hounds had a bumper meet at Courtown Gate on Saturday, the 6th inst., the Meath and Ward Union men swelling the array very considerably. A good fox, found at once at Courtown in a clump of trees, took the hounds along at capital pace by Laragh, over the brook to Lady Chapel, as if he was bound for Colestown in Meath; but, though within a few fields of Maynooth, he did not persevere on this tack, but made his way to the much nearer Taghadoe Gorse, and thence on to Dowdstown. The very

few who saw the beginning of this run enjoyed it extremely, though some of them did not get over the brook without a thorough drenching.

A second fox, found in Cullen's Gorse, ran through Dowdstown Lands to Taghadoe, and thence over a fine country, but in a most circuitous fashion, back to Taghadoe. A rainstorm coming on probably killed the early scent, and after this most of the distant comers dispersed, few following the pack to Lodge Park. I wind up with an extract from the *Pau Gazette* of the 11th ult., just received: "Captain Cosby, as he rode so splendidly his horse, elicited much admiration for his noble bearing and manly erectitude." The ex-master of *the Irish hounds* was, in fact, *fêted* unconsciously.

P.S.—The Meath hounds have begun the week right *royally*. On Monday they had a brilliant thirty-four minutes, from Gibstown to Dunmoe, which only five saw satisfactorily—Lieut.-Colonel Fraser, V.C., Lord Algernon Lennox, Captain Trotter, Mr. Walker (I think), and Goodall. On Tuesday they were blessed with the most driving scent, and they forced a fox from Corbalton to Gerrardstown, thence by Dunshauglin to Lagore, on by the Poorhouse Gorse to Ratoath village, and here they lost him. The pace was very animating, the line some of the cream of the Ward country, and the distance very considerable. I must recur to this when space is freer.

The Kildare hounds had a fine long hunting run on Tuesday afternoon from the Downshire, a very fast fifty-five minutes from Tinonode in the evening. The Ward men had a good gallop on Wednesday.

In my observations on Mr. Morrogh's hunter (who is since dead) I never meant to cast any reflection on Farrell's Repository in Dublin, so well known to all amateurs of horses. As a matter of fact, I have since learned that the horse showed symptoms of tetanus soon after arriving there. Copers cope there, as at Tatt.'s and everywhere else, but always within legitimate bounds.

XIV.

"Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin."

Courtown company—Corbalton chase—Punchestown programme—Dangan Bridge—Sam Reynell's death—Mr. Burton Persse.

I WILL begin this letter with words of good augury; for surely we are all tired of this constant omnipresent rain, which takes all the "grit" out of our hunters, ruins our war paint and hunting kit, makes our servants melancholy and *mishippical*, M.F.H.'s testy, farmers short and reflective, and upsets the domestic coach, from the cradle to the saddle room, from basement to attic, in more ways than I can here undertake to narrate. The glass is rising, and no rain worthy to be classed with either the "former" or the "latter rain" has fallen for two whole days. Let me paraphrase Pope's well-known couplet:

"Accept a miracle instead of wit—
See two dull lines by Stanhope's pencil writ,"

into—

"Behold the age of miracles again!
Two days have passed with very little rain!"

The floods—to use the beautiful language of a "mighty hunter"—no longer clap their hands. The rushing and rustling of myriad streams and rills, all plying their watery task with intense zeal, no longer fills the ear. The overflowing surface water has vanished from many a furrow, leaving the grass sere and sickly of hue as if its life blood had been poisoned. True,

there is a great deal of the vale still under the dominion of water; and a moonlight view of much of the low land when the air is still is like the sheen of silver. But Smith of Deanston has made us hopeful for the future; our hunting area is mainly under his beneficent influence (some say too much so), and two or three days of drying winds and cessation of showers will put a vast deal of the country into good going order once more. Like King Lear, "I tax ye not, ye elements." Half a season unchecked is a good long run. *Dona præsentis cape lætus horæ* is good Latin, and still better counsel. If the going be deep, the falling is soft, and it does not require the acumen of a Gully nowadays to tell us of the virtue of cold compresses for many of the pains and aches that flesh inherits.

The mention of the cold-water cure brings me to Saturday, the 6th inst., and its burden of sport in Kildare, to which I could only allude *en passant* in the last budget I sent you. The Kildare hounds met that day at Courtown Gate, which, for the information of distant readers, I may state is not a turnpike (we have abolished that nuisance in Ireland long ago), but a somewhat ambitious entrance to a spacious park, where Captain and Mrs. Davis have for some years found a capital stage for the exercise of that hunting hospitality which is one of the great social attractions of the royal sport, and where the Aylmer family before them—the proprietors of the property—ever made sport and hospitality go hand in hand. Courtown Gate is within a mile of Kilcock, a most important station on the Midland line of rails, and bringing this fixture within less than an hour of Dublin, and not much more of many places in Western Meath; while it is just within hunting range of what I may call the cis-Boyne part of Meath—of nearly all Kildare, including the soldier population of Newbridge and the Curragh. The country around Courtown is almost uninterruptedly pasture land, flat, but without any tendency to peat or red bog. The fields are large comparatively, the fences sound generally, and

mainly singles, and, on the whole, the hunting surroundings are not very dissimilar to what the eye ranges over in many portions of the Ward Union country. It is not to be wondered at, then, that Mr. Mansfield had a bumper meet, and that his chancellor of exchequer had siller to spare, as his take of half-crowns swelled up to the amount of a good many pounds. By the way, let me give a conundrum somebody suggested *apropos* of this half-crown collection :—What would be the proper designation for the crime of robbing the collector, say hustling him at a fence, and picking up the half-crowns when he was picking himself up? Why, *silver guilt* to be sure. The overflow of Ward Union men, who are just now flooded out of their own dear hunting grounds, was something to see—nearly a dozen boxes from the Broadstone terminus, and a special train to Kilcock. Among the occupants were Lieut.-Colonel Forster, Captain Ward Bennett, Captain O'Neal, and several of the Inniskillings ; a detachment of the 3rd Dragoon Guards ; Captain R. Barton, Mr. Waldron, Messrs. Turbitt, Rose, Coppinger, Gore, and Hone—of the latter name I think I counted some five or six out—for as 'tis given to some to inherit silver spoons, the Hone family appear to me to have a sort of birthright to good hunters, and the faculty of riding them straight.

Among the visitors from Meath were Colonel Fraser, V.C., the Hon. Captain Harbord, Lord Algernon Lennox, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Lord Langford, Captain Trotter, Mr. Trotter, Mr. George Murphy, Mr. P. Murphy, Mr. Dunne, Mr. Brown, Mr. M'Gerr, Mr. Rafferty. Newbridge and the Curragh were well represented by Major Dent and some of his brother officers of the 7th Dragoons, Captain Hanning-Lee, A.D.C., Mr. M'Donnell, R.H.A. ; while among the many Kildare pursuers were the Earl of Clonmel, the Earl of Mayo, Mr. W. Forbes and his sons, the Hon. C. Bourke, the Hon. Maurice Bourke, Lord Cloncurry, the Hon. E. Lawless, Mr. F. Tynte, Mr. Percy La Touche, Mr. W. Blacker, Mr. More O'Ferrall, General Irwin, Captain

Irwin, the Baron de Robeck, Mr. D. Mahony, Mr. S. Moore and Captain St. Leger Moore, Mr. Cook Trench, Mr. R. Bushe, Mr. Kirkpatrick, Captain Tuthill, Mr. Gerald Brook, the Messrs. Kennedy (three), Captain R. Mansfield, the Messrs. Rynd, etc.

The morning was mild in the extreme, but dark withal, and the clouds seemed laden with their daily burden of rain destined to fall ere many hours had gone by. The road men were, on the whole, very punctual; not so the large numbers who had entrusted themselves to the tender mercies of the rails; however, there is hope for them. Courtown has held foxes of late, and right good ones too; but the chances are strongly against their waiting patiently for the investigating pack in these hollow, skirting plantations and thin clumps, while wheels are grinding all round them, and the clatter of a century or two of hunters and covert hacks puts the most somnolent hen-harrier on his guard, and warns him of peril imminent in some shape or other. Hence a find at Courtown, when the meet is at the Gate, is far from a certainty; and a move to the neighbouring large gorse of Ballycaghan is generally the order of proceeding before the business of the day has begun in earnest. This gorse is so large, and takes so much drawing and forcing, that the tardy and train-stayed can generally hope to pick up the pack here, though, needless to say, they run a certain amount of risk in the venture. To-day, however, was a day of surprises. A fox jumped out of a small clump of trees in the park, raced across it, and, leaping the boundary fence into the road, started off at once in the direction of Laragh, the pack on good terms with him, and scent evidently most serving. Now, to jump a nasty drop into a road, for the initial fence, before nerves are properly braced is a strong measure, and requires resolution in man and his mount. Some did not hit on the nicest spot: perhaps others, if they did select a good place, were not prompt and decided enough in action. At any rate, though hounds did not check, men and horses paused considerably, and I fancy a few made a full stop of it. Laragh Gorse is here skirted, but the river

has to be done, and that, too, occasioned a little more delay, for not a few good men (two who have held the horn in their turn among them) came in for a ducking. The fox now crosses the road which leads from Maynooth to Courtown, and appears sailing away for Laragh Brien *en route*, it may be, to "the Hatchet," Colistown, or Mulhussey Gorse in Meath. At the road there is a partial check for a minute or so, but Will Freeman soon hits off the line by a quick fence, on towards Maynooth and the Midland line; but something or other has turned our gallant red rover, perhaps the vision of a train, a barge, or a canal boat, and he now turns round, and in a mile or rather more of slow hunting by Lady Chapel lands we bring him into Taghadoe Gorse, whence, after a few minutes, he is forced out and hunted into Dowdstown.

The first three miles of the run were very good; and between the leading division and the rear rank there must have been an interval of fully a mile. Among the former were the master, Lord Langford, Captain Trotter, W. R. Kennedy and his nephew, the Hon. E. Lawless, Captain O'Neal, Mr. Bayley, and a few more.

Cullens Gorse, which has been appealed to so very often this year, and never that I can remember in vain, again furnished *pabulum* for sport. A very quick find, a race over a pasture field, a fly into most sobering plough, a road and the next field gained, crossed by a nasty quickset hedge and ditch, a smart gallop into Taghadoe, with half-a-dozen flying fences *en route*, including a *quasi* brook; a jam at *the* gate which must have been put up before Kildare became a fashionable hunting centre, and we are once more sailing on towards Laragh and Courtown again; about half way thither two gunners and a dog scare our fox, who, unwilling to give up his point, tries to compass it by a flank movement. But all in vain, fresh obstacles apparently diverting him from his object; and so we wind round grass fields and get back to Taghadoe for the third time to-day, though not till a good many, like Horace and his friend at Philippi,

"Turpe solum tetigere mento."

The motive cause being a double, rather lean and narrow in the shoulder, where I saw my two predecessors involuntarily making Catherine-wheels in mid-air. Straffan furnished the third fox of the day, but his pursuit to Clongowes Woods hardly calls for much notice—the inevitable downpour closes the day. Whether it was a sudden afflatus or contagion, I know not—whether the fact of Meath, Ward, and Kildare meeting on a fine arena had anything to do with thrusting, it is not for me to say. Certain it is that men meant riding up to the motto "Be with them I will," and to-day falls and immersions had no deterrent effect; of both there was a good crop, with no bad results apparently, though Major Dent got rather a hard squeeze.

I have just read, in your sporting contemporary's last issue, of a very fine run, which reminds me forcibly of the bard's precept:

> "Whate'er you say, or write, or do,
> Let probability be kept in view."

(I quote from memory, and perhaps not quite correctly.) He is talking of last Thursday week in Meath, I rather think, when his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught was in the field, and proceeds to say, "Slater's Gorse was then the order, and from this a downright '*rattler*' instantly took his departure, going at a terrific pace to Corbalton, and nearly as straight as a rule to Trim, when he got to ground after *two and a half* hours *without a single check.*" This is, indeed, a *paper chase*, evolved, like the camel, from inner consciousness. I doubt much if the annals of fox-hunting furnish a record of *any run* ever occupying two hours and a half without a single check—at least not in this country, since hounds have been bred for dash and drive. Your contemporary is generally accurate in his information, but in this case our faith is severely strained.

I read also, in a "daily," a description of the gyrations of a hare told with much minuteness of topography, and I doubt not with great fidelity; but when the narrator proceeds to informs us,

his readers, that the hare had pointed "his mask" to So-and-so, the impression involuntarily steals on me that I am reading the troubled annals of a companion of Puss in Boots, or one of that curious and historic family!

On Monday—a fine clear day—the Ward Union hounds and men still remained quiescent, waiting for the subsidence of the floods and the good effects of nature's drying processes on their well-soaked soil. The Meath hounds met at Donaghpatrick Bridge, which is not a popular fixture, and in the estimation of those whom I consulted (not having been there myself) about the worst rendezvous in the Meath roster. As it is not prudent either in war or its image to venture into distant lands without an assured retreat, and the single return train on the Meath and Navan line is dispatched on the Dublin route too early for safety or pleasure —I mean the safety of catching it—I did not visit this meeting-place; which, if it did nothing else, redeemed its character, and illustrated for the thousandth time the *bonheur de l'imprévus*—the best part of fox-hunting—most gloriously. The gallop from Gibstown to Dunmoe over a fair line and at great pace is described to me by one of the actors in the play as most brilliant; and my informant is not a biassed son of the soil, and has had a wide experience of various packs. Five got off in this gallop, and were about the only section of the field who saw this thirty-four minutes really satisfactorily. I hope none of the quintette will be offended by a publication of their names, which were Lieut.-Colonel Fraser, V.C., Lord Algernon Lennox, Mr. Trotter, Mr. Walker, and Goodall, the huntsman. It is a good criterion of the quality of a run when you find the enthusiasm is unevaporated on the following day, and those who were "out of it" can speak in the highest commendation still. Such was the case on Tuesday, one of the most glorious days which the young year has vouchsafed us hitherto. It commenced with haze and fog, and seemed inclined to relapse into that condition by three o'clock; but from ten to three nothing could be imagined finer

than the atmospheric surroundings—a sun so hot that a covert coat was a positive encumbrance; even the ordinary heavy pink would have been willingly exchanged for something summery and light by most pursuers after a mile or two. The air was luminously clear; and of wind there was absolutely none. Hardly the day you would prophesy a burning, driving scent, with the grass at noon still laden with dewdrops. Those who struggled for four or five miles over those wide pastures between Corbalton and Lagore will have a good idea of how a pack can drive a fox when they have it all their own way—no stopping; no interference from the riding crowds, whom they easily distance. But I am anticipating the sequence of events.

The Meath hounds met at Dunshaughlin village on Tuesday, the 9th instant. There is very little to say about this hunting centre. An ugly, ragged, colourless town, set in a sea of the most vivid and verdant grass lands—flat for the most part. I think it about the best meet on the Meath card, taking everything into consideration; its accessibility by road and rail from Dublin (Batterstown and Drumree stations are very near), as well as from Navan, the country to which it is a portal, and the holding nature of the quiet gorse close by—the Poor-house Gorse, which it is part of the programme to visit always first. The wetness of the surrounding fields, however, made Mr. Waller anxious to bring us, if possible, into sounder and higher ground to-day, so the rule was broken to-day *pour cause*. The meet was a fairly large one, swelled by a large influx from Dublin Garrison and the Ward Union *désœuvrés* sportsmen. In this division were Lord Clanmorris, A.D.C., and Captain Crosbie, A.D.C., a good many of the 3rd Dragoon Guards, Messrs. Wardrop, Hartigan, Yatman, Barber, Lee, Captain Bloomfield, and some Inniskillings; Messrs. Turbitt, Coppinger, Hone, Greenhill, and other Ward men, with Jem Brindley, the whip, while among the visitors were Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, the Hon. Mr. Harbord, Lord Algernon Lennox.

Meath was at the trysting-place in great numbers and force;

but we are now trotting on to Reisk Gorse, not a few having lingered in the neighbourhood of the Poor-house, unwilling to believe that the time-honoured usage could be violated. The find in Reisk Gorse was very quick, and the way hounds raced over the wide fields which separate this covert from Kilbrue, told us at once that scent was all ablaze. The fox got to ground in a burrow near the old lane-way at Kilbrue, so this stage of the proceedings was of quick accomplishment; a mile or two brings us back again to Corbalton lands, which the Reisk Gorse abuts. The plantations here yielded no music till the narrow road was crossed, and from a clump of laurels out jumped a good fox, who did not hang a moment, but went away straight as if for Killeen or Dunsany Woods. These he did not reach, for, bending to the left, he led us for about a couple of miles or rather less over grass land of wide extent, till he reached Gerrardstown Gorse. I do not think he entered it, but merely brushed by it, and thence his course lay straight onwards by Dunshaughlin church, left a field or two to the right, across the Navan road, through Mr. Morris's farm (which those in search of a handy hunter or two might visit with profit), then by those low grass fields which border Lagore till we reached the boundary fence. It looks nothing—it is nothing, really—a fine wide sloping bank, with a watery ditch in front; but up to this the pace has been very severe, the grass land very holding though sound; the day tells on hounds as well as horses, and this boundary fence makes horses check if hounds are still running. I see the best cob in the county in the ditch, with his hard rider standing over him—every practicable place has a horse jammed or refusing. Fifty yards further on I see the hardest man in Ireland (or well-nigh it) trying in vain to extricate one of his good stud from a boggy drain whence ropes alone can haul him. A couple of hundred yards further you will see half a score or more wandering, like ghosts along the Styx, by the edge of a black sort of chasm margined by a wide, high bank, which horses might have tried thirty minutes ago, but are too wise to

attempt now. Needless to do so; there is a hunting gate within a short distance. The hounds have taken their fox by the edge of the Poor-house Gorse, over some rather swampy lands, intersected by most black-hued, repelling-looking drains. We are now on Ballymore lands: half a mile further brings us to the verge of Ratoath, and here we lose our fox by the edge of a brook which he probably used for his own baffling purposes, in a small tributary to which Goodall narrowly escaped total immersion. There was a rumour that Kilrue Gorse would wind up the day, but the kennels were a long way off. Most horses were beaten, and I think there was a general feeling that enough had been done to-day. The gallop I have just outlined for your readers was really a splendid one for those who rode it through and through; for it was somewhat of a semicircle, and a road formed an arc, which would have shortened the distance greatly, not to speak of the heavy going. The line lay over very large pastures of old grass, fairly fenced; and for my own part I can only recollect jumping into one very small bit of plough in the nine or ten miles traversed. The surprises of fox-hunting were again exemplified here. After the first scurry from the Reisk most men concluded that we were in for a parky, pic-nicing sort of day, interspersed with some cub-hunting. The fine scent prevented that catastrophe, as hounds kept working along with a will; and as for my experience, I can aver that, starting as I did on an animal I had hacked very fast to covert, I never saw the smallest chance of changing to a hunter till we got to Lagore, when the glory was virtually over, and of course the horse was *not* forthcoming then.

The Louth hounds, who had an interregnum of a week, began hunting again on Tuesday, the 2nd, at Castle Bellingham, finding lots of foxes at Bragganstown, and running three to ground. A brace turned up next at Drumcashel, and the hounds got away on very good terms with one. He sank the hill and swam the Dee, which was in flood, and only to be crossed by a bridge a mile distant; the pack, meanwhile, went over Richardstown and

Mullacurry and got to Ashville, where they were found at fault, owing to a flock of sheep and a herd of cattle having foiled the land. A six-mile point had been done under the hour. The line now led on to Collon, but coldly.

On the 5th they were at Balbriggan station, and had a ring by the Naul from Knockbrack—twenty-two minutes, and a good line. A second fox was found in Harbourstown, who made two rings, the second a wide one; when forced out again he crossed Snowtown Hill, and, leaving the Naul to the left, entered Westown. Here Mr. Filgate stopped them, with a beaten fox in front of them, as a train had to be caught. They had hunted continuously for one hour and fifteen minutes, and deserved their prey.

The almost imperceptibly lengthening days, even if we disregarded dates, warn us that the pastime of princes must ere many weeks give way to the popular pastime of steeplechasing. Already busy caterers and *entrepreneurs* are framing programmes and bidding high for favour with trainers and the public. Punchestown is a sort of Areopagus among the minor assemblies it regulates; it controls, it gives a tone and colouring to the others so far as it is possible; and Punchestown this year presents a revised and altered programme to a certain extent. Among the *on dits* about its attractions is a projected sweepstakes for real *bonâ fide* hunt horses that have been owned and worked since January 1st, 1877. The idea is novel—decidedly attractive; but the winner would in all probability turn up in some highly bred weed with jumping and galloping power, but such as most masters of hounds would rather see in any other stable than their own. A first-class hunt-horse would rarely prove the winner of a chase unless in an extra large or intricate country, and after winning he would probably take six or eight months to get back into true huntsman's form in Ireland.

Second to Punchestown, and of totally different character from the majority of Irish race meetings (and by this difference I do not insinuate dispraise), comes the Fairy House meeting, with its genuine intelligible programme and heavy weight of metal. No

country that I know of owes more to the occupiers of the soil than the Ward Union territory; no country is more *empressé* to acknowledge the obligation, and where possible to repay it—*ecce signum!* A race of £120 is annually given by this hunt for the farmers of the district, and, in addition, they are eligible to compete for two other races, value about £200. Just now a meeting of farmers has been invited to attend to arrange the conditions of their own competition at the approaching Fairy House gathering, and a popular and filling article may be consequently anticipated.

On Wednesday, the 10th instant, the loyal, the brave, but above all the curious, rendezvoused at every coign of vantage and bay window that could command a good view of his Excellency the Lord-Lieutenant's processional entrance into the metropolis of his new viceroyalty. The pomp, the pride, and circumstance of war require flashing suns and bright skies to illustrate their best parade features aright; lurid skies, choked with vapour or fog, throw their gloom over the brightest conceptions and the most effective details. So the entrance was not magnificent, though the arrangements were well made and dovetailed admirably. The sword which, in the archaic words of the Liturgy, her Majesty the Queen had committed into her servant's hands, was not *en evidence.* His Grace the Duke of Marlborough comes to us in the era of flood, storm, and deluge! Is he destined to be "the dove of peace and promise to our ark," the sword to be exchanged at last for the olive branch?

The day was further noteworthy in that the Ward Union men resumed hunting on that date, and had three or four miles at capital pace from Ballyhack, by Harborstown, Ballymacoll, and Priestown, before the deer took to the road near Hollywood Rath. The rivers in this county are anything but down to their natural level, the whole Tolka Valley being partially submerged. Mr. George Brook's harriers had a capital afternoon round Laragh Brien, finding game almost too plentiful; while Meath was sipping what I may, without any sinister punning meaning, call "the

cream of the valley" about Dunshaughlin. On Tuesday the Kildare hounds had a long and eventful day in the neighbourhood of Blessington, which was their meeting-place. Finding, as usual, in the Downshire Park, the hounds raced their fox at top speed across Glen Ding, the Naas road, and Slie Rhue, till he came to the well-known ravine overlooking Elverstown; up to this point, I hear, the pace was so good that the tail hounds never decreased their distance from the leaders, though straining after them. Here, if report be true, the hounds were hurried a bit, and a pause of some very precious moments was the consequence. From this point pursuit became "potter;" but the pack worked on admirably, following their fox, first towards Eadestown, then right over Athgarrett Hill, thence by the edge of the old Punch Bowl Covert, towards Three Castles, where he tried some earths; then back by Mr. Dunne's lands, in a winding line towards Gouchers; then one hears of a sheep-dog intervening, and the fox is finally lost by Castle Inch, near Coolmine. An extremely long hunting run, most interesting to the hound men, not exciting enough for the hard riders; but they too had their turn presently, for a second fox, found in one of the Tinode Ravines, ran the glen right through to the Gate Lodge, crossed the Blessington road, and, picking a capital path for himself and his followers through the heavy pastures on the far side, held on to within a field of Three Castles Covert. Then he turned back by Mr. Boothman's house, ran across the dividing hill to Punchestown (not the race track), swept over the large fields under Kieel, and won his way back ultimately to Tinode, when the hounds were stopped at 4.45, after a very fast fifty-five minutes, of which only half-a-dozen saw the last stage. A distribution of the falls among the original morning field would give a fair average, as the hard men got not a few repetitions, and not many who rode at all escaped. Will any hunting M.P. in Ireland be bold enough to propose that a brace of colley dogs shall be restricted (save under larger licence) to sheep owners and their herds. They are deadly to game, and they constantly mar

a stag or fox-hunt at a critical time. I see by a recent decision that to keep a greyhound lawfully you must own £1000. Can we believe that the Sunday poachers and other greyhound and lurcher owners of that calibre are good for a "thou" each?

Black sheep will always infest a large fold, but it is pleasant to see brilliant instances of their repudiation by the white-woolled flock. Lord Huntingdon recently lost some hounds by poison. His country at once subscribed the most tempting sums to lead to conviction, and have thus one and all assoiled themselves of the shame.

"The west wind sighs," says the bard. I should like to have put the said bard on a hunter, with orders not to jog more than six or seven miles an hour, and to ride westwards on Friday morning, from, let us say, Dunboyne station to Larracor, some fourteen or fifteen miles, and then ask him what he thinks of the appositeness of his verse. To me the sighs seemed to come from an iceberg, which, peradventure, the Arctic expedition had detached from the frozen continent, to wander till dissolution in the warm Gulf Stream! The night had been rainy, and there were signs and tokens of more water all round and in front of me on the road; but the day itself was bright and clear, the sky was high, and the sun radiant. By the time we reached Dangan Castle the road began to fill with men, horses, and carriages, and there were signs and tokens of a very large gathering at Larracor; for, *teste* the great dean himself (Swift), fox-hunting was more popular in Pagan Meath than were his homilies a few generations ago; but what is this? The tide which had set for Larracor has turned now for Summerhill. In a moment or two the terribly sad and stunning cause is learnt by all—"Sam Reynell" died suddenly yesterday! The first whip, J. Bishop—an *élève* of his, and a credit to him—has been sent by Mr. Waller to say that there can be no hunting to-day; and, indeed, I fear the Meath hunting annals will feel a break now for some days.

It seems but a day or two ago that Mr. Reynell was among us at Rahinstown (how well I recollect his kindness on that occasion in asking me to his house for two meets not easily accessible to me!) full of health and spirits! His biography in a recent "Baily" tells *something* of what he did for fox-hunting in the two Meaths; nobody can tell *how much* he did. Almost every spare energy and thought of an active mind was for years bent on the work he had undertaken; and he did it thoroughly. It may be said he was a slave to his idea—most successful men are. It may be cavilled that it carried him occasionally beyond the modern *suaviter in modo*, when fox or hound was concerned. He was an enthusiast certainly, and Talleyrand's *surtout pas trop de zèle* was entirely lost on him. In him we may well paraphrase the lines:

"My heart leaps up whene'er I hear
The fox-hounds' tuneful cry;
So was it when I was a boy,
So let it be when I am old,
Or let me die."

I am well assured his love never abated.

It was my fortune on returning from my sad and ineffectual ride to meet Mr. George Brook's harriers at work with a hare between Hamwood and Ballymacoll. They then went to Offalis, found an extremely straight runner, and had a very sharp gallop at top speed towards Ballymaglasson, and then in the direction of "the Hatchet," when the venerable night stopped proceedings. The hare selected a perfect bit of vale, intersected by widish singles for the most part, and ran more direct as if for a point than any hare I have seen for some time.

Dangan Bridge is one of Lord Waterford's most successful meeting-places. On the 5th, his hounds were there, and finding their first fox at Knockbrack, ran him very fast to Liskertin, apparently for Brownstown Wood. A slight check here occurs, but Duke soon sets the pack going under Tallagher village, in

the direction of Woodstock. Another check here, and wrong information and then cold hunting, but not till a six-mile point had been done in thirty-six minutes over a fine, wild, sporting country. The master saw it all well. Dirty coats were not uncommon after it. On Monday, the 8th, this pack met at Churchtown, and after some woodland hunting, drew Rathgormack Gorse, a good sure holder. Its fox broke for Ballyneale, but was headed and turned leftwards to the verge of Coolnamuck Wood, when he was met by a rustic, and a check was the result (the three miles up to this had been got over in fifteen minutes). Duke then cast "the ladies" to the right, when they hit it off, and, crossing the Dungarvan road, sent their fox into Carrick Wood, three miles further on, hustling him through its length, past Mount Bottom, over the high park wall, into Curraghmore Chase (it bounds some 6000 Irish acres); through the Tower Hill plantations, without pause or dwell, into Carraboluclea Wood, forced him over the wall again towards Carrick Wood, and rolled him over at Tinhalla, after some fifteen miles had been covered in two hours fifteen minutes.

Thursday, the 4th, in Kildare was not remarkable, save to a good many people for the long distances they had to travel for a modicum of sport. Bolton Hill was the meeting-place, Hobartstown the first successful covert. Here two foxes were on foot, of which the dog-pack selected their own quarry, sending him to Kilkea, where he hung for some time. Thence he was hustled along into the Carlow country, and ultimately sent to Kilkea Hill. An afternoon fox, found at Spratstown Gorse, ran by Matt Conran's Covert, towards the bottom lands, under Ballintaggart. A fresh fox and a holloa spoilt, I hear, a promising run.

Here is a sample of some of the sport which Mr. Burton Persse has been showing in Galway. I can only give it in epitome. On the 4th, his pack met at Blindwell, where they did not find, but a good fox broke at once from Castle Grove for Sylvane; then, changing his point, ran through Ironpool by Milford and Cloghan,

through Milbourne on to a large head of earths near Bellemount; but his strength failed him, and after one hour and twenty minutes he was pulled down by the "Burnt House." This was on the Tuam side of Mr. Persse's country. On the 8th, they were on the Loughrea side, at Eastwell, Lord Delvin's residence, and ran two foxes to ground, the pack dividing. Carra Gorse was equal to its fame to-day, and a stout-hearted fox left it, apparently for Ballydugan; but a bend to the left brings him close to Hollyfield Gorse, thence over the magnificent pastures of Kilcooly, on towards Limehill and Streamstown, by Grange Covert, just eluding his death grip in a cave by Springvale. The line was light riding grass (comparatively), the pace something short of flying for thirty-five minutes. On the evening of the 9th came the Hunt Ball, when Liddell's band did the music *vice* the Moyode choir, and "the field" consisted of well-nigh 300. On the 11th, meeting at the Knockbrack, in the Athenry country, they found in a small gorse near Belleville and killed, after a twenty minutes' race into Athenry, by the verge of the town. From Goodbody's Covert they had a good forty-five minutes to ground. On the 12th, they met at the Oranmore station, and, finding in Kiltrogar (a covert planted and presented to the hunt by the late Lord Clanmorris), hunted a bold fox who held his point in the teeth of the wind till a Board of Works canal in full flood was reached. The fox had crossed it; the hounds dashed in after, but were borne down ever so far by the current. The field had to go round for a bridge, but by good luck and hard riding came up with the pack as they were leaving Mr. Meldon's farm. From here they push on their fox through Castle Lambert, through Mr. Goodbody's farm, where he tried the earths, over the Tuam rails towards Grayin Abbey, within two fields of which he was rolled over. From find to kill measures a ten-mile point, the distance traversed probably nearly fifteen. Every hound took part in the worry, and the time of the chase was one hour thirty-five minutes.

XV.

"Could we his bygone pages read,
His feats by flood and field;
The varied narrative, indeed,
An Iliad might yield."

Ballinglough burst—Culmullen chase—The Black Bull—The Grange.

WHAT has been will be, and the procession of the seasons and their phenomena continue their miraculous course, which we mortals of many lustrums get so used to that we talk of the course of nature and the order of things! January is only repeating itself this year, and the chances are that many hundreds of years ago the farmers of the fertile Milanese were wont to complain of the flooded fields and the incursions of the Po and his tributaries every January, just as we have been inveighing against this two-faced month for its burden of waters and unremitting downpour in 1877. I see by an old Roman calendar that Cancer sets, and in the middle of this month Aquarius and his hose come into play:

"Irrorat Aquarius annum."

Of course the earlier commencement of the season of *les grandes eaux* is due to our faster times; for it would indeed be hard if an age of progress only landed us a few days ahead of those old Pagans!

Marte gravis! A week since, we were listening to wars and rumours of wars, and men's hearts were failing them for the things coming on the East. Now the war cloud seems passing away, and the image of war once more engrosses soldiers and sailors, statesmen and squires, in its vortex. "Leaves" seem to be less dubious now; men appear to be buying horses, with somewhat more confidence, "to finish the season" withal—for, disguise it from our minds and memories as we may, half the season has already flitted away into the past. The better half, according to popular estimation, "remains to be crowned by us yet." Longer days, lighter land, sharper foxes, horses more experienced and in better condition, fences fairer, men harder, hunt servants quicker, the whole machinery in better working trim—these are a few of the blessings which the second season is supposed to bring in its train. Let us, now that it is a retrospect, be just to the three months' hunting which we have enjoyed in Ireland. If the ground was adamantine in early October, it has been soft enough for the screws and navicularly affected ever since. Frost has kept away, having frightened us by a brief interlude which merely impeded the hunting current for a few hours. Scent, since the land got well soaked, has been marvellously good. Sport has been keeping pace with it, and the supply of foxes has been so good that I hazard a statement that there have not been five blank days—certainly not more—in all Ireland up to the present date (mid-January). Abnormal rainstorms certainly did spoil sport for a day or two; but even in the worst day of the storm period one or two packs made capital weather of it, and had fine continuous pursuits. The Ward Union hounds suffered most from the rain and its effects. But their basin is subject to these visitations almost annually; nor were they totally exempt last year, their country being under the flood ban for a week, if I mistake not, at the commencement of the season.

I concluded my last letter with the melancholy tidings of "Sam" Reynell's death. I must now go back to the very Thurs-

day of his seizure, when the Meath hounds had met at Drewstown, and had just found their second fox in Ballinlough, and taken him backwards and forwards between that place (Sir Charles Nugent's) and Killua Castle, Sir B. Chapman's park. The pack were streaming after their fox out of Ballinlough when the news of Mr. Reynell's death reached Mr. Waller. He at once ordered Goodall to stop the hounds; but they were racing, and Mrs. Partington's celebrated broom was of about as much avail to keep out a rising tide. Something about a score, I hear, got off with them, and all went merry as a marriage-bell till a boggy-banked river barred progress. Mr. Dunville gave them a good lead, but somehow Goodall and Captain P. Lowe alone profited by it, and they had the satisfaction of being nearly the sole pursuers over a fine sound line of country, which bore very little trace of the recent downpour, and which hounds have not been known to run over for a very long time. The fox pointed first for Caucestown, then beat to the right and made Cloghbrack, where he got to ground—forty-three minutes, without pause or dwell to enable Goodall and his small field to stop the flying pack. Strangely enough, I learnt that a small strip of wood, through the length of which they ran, did not detain them a second, for scent lay there as well as on the turf. I alluded to the circumstance of my having met Mr. Brook's harriers on my return from Larracor, and enjoying a very fast gallop with them. A Kildare pursuer fell in for even a better thing (longer, at least) with the Newbridge harriers, who took a hare, or possibly an outlying fox, over the line of the old Kildare Red-coat course, by Kilteel, round by Rathmore, into Furniss, till, I hear, the hounds got rid of their field.

Saturday, the 13th, the Kildare hounds repeated their own history by meeting at Hazelhatch station, on the Great Southern and Western line of rails. There had been a severe frost during the night, and by nine o'clock a thick enamel covered everything, and made even the low-lying pastures feel very hard to the tread,

and the spots poached by cattle almost unridable. Very soon, however, came an hour's rain, and dispersed and dissolved all the congelations of the night. The meet was a very large one, though Meath was almost wholly unrepresented, and the Ward Union men did not muster a dozen strong altogether; Mr. Adair was there from the Queen's County, Lord Oranmore from Galway (both admirably mounted apparently); General Herbert, as senior officer, commanded a miniature army recruited from the Dublin Garrison, the Curragh, and Newbridge, consisting of a very large squadron of Inniskillings, some half-a-dozen or more of the Rifle Brigade, a few of the 7th Dragoons, a guardsman or two, and men of the 75th and 4th Foot. Captain J. M'Calmont, long an absentee from the plains of Kildare, reappeared there to-day, and, with Colonel Frank Forster, represented the new Household. Winding through the streets of Celbridge, Mr. Mansfield led his knights-pursuers into Castletown Park, where a fox was very soon on foot. His career was brief, as he saved himself—to run, we'll trust, further on a future day—in a gaping sewer. Cullen's Gorse had been so frequently appealed to of late that this, "the last appeal," proved wholly inefficacious, and the good stout fox who had done his duty by Kildare right foxfully knew it not to-day. Taghadoe, another gorse which has been very useful this year, was tenantless; so I may repeat my paraphrase of the Laureate's, "Bad luck to the country! the clock had struck one; no foxes forthcoming—no hunting begun!" For of the Castletown rat we need not take any account till he prove more worthy of a niche in fox history. Courtown furnished the esurients with much much refreshment, solid and liquid, some jumping, but no fox. Remains Ballycaghan; but at this stage much desertion took place, the distances beginning to tell on the comers from afar, and those dependent on trains and time-tables. A quick find in Ballycaghan Gorse, very little covert hustling, and away the good fox speeds, for Cappagh apparently—two miles over grass—as hard as horses can gallop. Three or four of the wide pastures in

this direction, however, had not been crossed before our fox began to bend to the left, as if Hortlands were his object; Newtown village is left on the right hand, and now, by the edge of the road leading to it, a check occurs. "Volatile" leads her sisterhood over the road into beautiful green fields; but the clue has been mainly lost, and, though we got a very enjoyable canter over a mile or two of old turf, intersected by three or four wide fences, and one a bank and deep drop—which caused some grief, but immense amusement and peals of laughter—nothing came of Freeman's rapid casts in the Hortland direction; and on visiting Cappagh Gorse, as the westering sun was lighting up the whole horizon with brilliancy, it was only to find a fox one moment, and presently to hear "who-whoop! who-whoop!" in the covert—why I know not. Gone to ground! A poor day's sport; but those who hold that larking over splendid old pasture lands and fair fences is better than a gallop over plough and plough obstacles, had enough to content their aspirations to-day.

I alluded in my last letter to the fine gallop which the Meath hounds had from Gibstown to Dunmoe, when five alone filled the ranks of persevering pursuit. The line led through Randlestown, over Syllogue Hill, and here it was that a huge boundary fence weeded out the field. By all accounts it was a very brilliant thirty-five minutes, interrupted but by a single pause of very short duration in Craig's Covert. Gibstown is a very hard place to get away from, and often involves a long weary round. "Sam" Reynell's death has dislocated all plans and arrangements in royal Meath—now verily and truly *mœrens* Meath. The hunt ball, which was to have taken place on Wednesday, is postponed indefinitely. Westmeath put off her meet at Gillardstown on Friday; the Allenstown harriers theirs at Drumcree. There will be no hunting, save stag-hunting, on this side of the country (by which I mean Dublin and Meath) till after Mr. Reynell's funeral to-morrow (Tuesday). Every one is going there to pay the tribute of a sportsman to the remains of a very great one, and till then *pendent opera interrupta.*

In Kildare Monday's meet at Eagle Hill has been put off in consequence of the death of the Hon. Mrs. Borrowes, the wife of Major Borrowes, of Gilltown, one of Kildare's most holding coverts. Major Borrowes was for some seasons the master of the Cottesmore hounds.

En revanche for these postponements, interruptions, and their sad causes, the Ward Union hounds, released from their durance of ten days or a fortnight, have had two glorious pursuits consecutively. Of the first (Saturday's) I can only repeat what I hear, that everything combined to make it a splendid pursuit, as there is an interval of somewhere about fifteen miles between the point of enlargement and the point of capture by Beau Parc on the Boyne. Of the second I can speak *ex cathedrâ*, though the cathedrâ was that of a very distant spectator and follower over a portion of the line—but I anticipate events. Let me begin with the painful lesson in punctuality which, much and sorely needed, I learnt in the forenoon. Having great faith in a big stable clock and a fast stepper, I drove to Maynooth station to catch the morning train from Mullingar. It was vanishing as I drove up. A bad beginning; but there is ample consolation—the Ward Union hounds are at Culmullen cross roads at 1.15 p.m. You can easily reach that place in time, says the soothing spirit to the irritated inward man. Too true! but, as a matter of fact, I did not, and the hounds and deer and their followers were a mile off, when I should have been in the ranks of pursuit, or stragglers, at any rate. The whereabouts of the line was marked by spectators on every little eminence, so, pushing along, we got alongside of the worst-beaten division presently; but a mile of good firm road gave the leaders such a second start that to catch them or the pack was quite beyond my power, though, to verify the line, I followed the tracks over a very pleasant bit of country. The morning was intensely cold and rimy; ice sheeted over the pools, but by nine o'clock rain began to fall with that gushing persistency which no longer surprises us, and till three o'clock

continued with hardly a moment's pause. The field at Culmullen cross-roads was not large by any means, though recruited from Meath by Lord Langford, Captain P. Lowe, Mr. Chadwick, Mr. Murphy, and a few more, while the Dublin Garrison also aided to fill the ranks, principally with men from the 3rd Dragoon Guards. Culmullen itself is on rather high ground, while stretching away below to the eastward is a fine valley, through which the Meath line runs it single rail. The enlargement took place near a new church in process of erection, and the deer, jumping a somewhat impracticable wall, put her mounted pursuers at rather a disadvantage to begin with. There is a driving wind from the south-west, and the deer goes away straight for Batterstown—not quite in the teeth, but about what sailors would call close-hauled. It is a heavy, swampy line of pasture for about two Irish miles between Culmullen and Batterstown. This was the deer's course, and, as scent was very warm, no wonder a good many horses had little left at the end of this stage. It did not, however, quite reach to Batterstown, but, turning at Piper Hill, led on towards "the Hatchet;" and here a good hard road helped horses for a bit after the soppy, holding grass lands. Soon it bends to the left, and, passing through Ballymaglasson, steers a tract between Baytown and Vesington, crossing the by-road leading to Rathbeggan at a small bridge; thence it goes on to the verge of Wood Park, over one or two very pleasant little brooks (if you are on a water jumper), then it uses a lane for a few hundred yards, till, crossing the Dunboyne road, Norman's Gorse is made, and in a mile or so more Clonee (on the high road to the metropolis) is reached. Thence the line diverges on to Cruice Rath (the home of a very popular sportsman, Mr. Maxwell, now, alas! in small health, whose liberality has made his harriers *les bienvenus* in any country in any weather), and here the capture was made. Take a compass and measure the points of this gallop on the Ordnance Survey map. Few packs in a cycle of seasons can boast a straighter, longer, or better line, though the latter part was rather spoilt by roads.

A circular bids me attend a meeting of the Kildare Hunt Club at Naas on the 22nd. The subjects to be considered there are: First, the future mastership; secondly, the separation of the management of the country from the mastership of the hounds—"country" standing generally for fowl damage, covert expenses, and compensation claims of various characters. As to the mastership, if Kildare's sons decline the honourable but responsible and onerous office, it appears to me that the panacea for the wants of a sporting age, *The Field* and its contemporaries' advertising columns, must be resorted to. There are not a few enterprising men of good means, position, and leisure in England and Scotland who would gladly welcome such an opportunity. Liberal subscriptions and a grass country; pleasant society and good houses; Dublin within an hour, London within less than a dozen; an army of all arms cantoned close by, to protect and enliven; racing within easy reach, and "lep" racing all round your quarters, wherever you may make them; good farmers, most loyal to fox-hunting, and land that rides light and does not overtax hunters—such are a few of the good things which Kildare men perhaps value less than outsiders, because they have grown up among them, and familiarity has dulled the keenness of appetite. Add to all this that there never was a time, perhaps, when the undertaking of the management of this pack involved less outlay or personal trouble. New kennels (most healthy they have proved) have been built centrally, to command the country by road and rail. The chain of coverts is perfect in every link, and the stock of foxes is very good. Of the hounds it were superfluous to say much; I do not think even a very fastidious master could find much to cavil at in looks or performance. Such as they are, they are ready to hand, and thus one main source of anxiety and expense to a new M.F.H. is saved. I believe there is a prejudice against the introduction of a "stranger" as master in some minds. There are many obvious reasons *in favour* of new blood, if of the right strain; not many cogent ones, to my fancy, against it. Such

a trust would not be delegated lightly or inconsiderately by a country ; and, as in leases, there would of course be strict clauses, covenants, and conditions. The power of the purse is a strong curb to any M.F.H. ; and it would be the committee's fault if any serious or lasting injury were done to either country or pack, supposing the almost inconceivable notion that the "stranger" were either grossly ignorant, prejudiced, or malevolent. A colonel from another corps will be just as likely to do justice to a cavalry regiment as a regimental promotion.

On Tuesday, the Meath hounds would have been due at Ratoath but for the death of the great master spirit departed, to whose obsequies I know a vast number of the *aristoi* in the world of hunting, and also in the social world, are hurrying to-day irrespective of business or pleasure—Quorn meets, Tailby meets, or Kildare fixtures—all anxious to pay a last tribute to what I may call a past master of his craft, who for more than a generation wore the crown of royal Meath, a king of its royal sport. Ratoath is the portal to so much fine country on all sides, that for the sake of my readers I regret that my surveys did not embrace some scenes in that neighbourhood. The alternative was Johnstown Inn in Kildare, sure to attract a large assemblage, which in point of fact was the starting-place from whence, after some hours, we got a capital and most enjoyable run—of that more presently—but which I could not compare to Ratoath in point of the great hunting unities, that, with luck and good handling, lead to a great epic in action. As I drove thither betimes, I met the Earl of Clonmell posting on to be in time for the sad funeral procession, abandoning a fashionable meet close to his home to fulfil the dictates of friendship and kindliness of heart. Well, is it not written that sometimes a visit to a house of mourning is better than to a house of feasting? I forget the words, but the idea is somewhat cast in that mould. A gusty morning, and very dark. The rainfall (our almost daily portion) was only kept off by the wind, and so soon as that lulled was bound to descend in torrents. The

village of Johnstown was full, very full, of hunting visitors—I might almost say guests; for are we not bidden by Mr. Mansfield to a grand spectacle and great games? There were not quite so many as at the opening festival in October—not near so much carriage pomp or bravery of apparel—and yet the meet was very fashionably attended. Half a score of ladies, if not a whole score, riding—nay, I am not sure now, if there were not even more; a good many driving; while the Marquis and Marchioness of Drogheda surveyed the peripheries of the day from one of Comerford's famous hack cars, sure to be well driven and well horsed. There were very few Meath men, *pour cause;* but Mr. and Mrs. Adair were there from the Queen's County, while Dublin Garrison and Dublin city were strongly represented—the former by Captains Ward Bennett, O'Neal, Bloomfield, Peareth, and other Inniskillings; by Messrs. Stewart, Wardrop, Hartigan, and others of the 3rd Dragoon Guards; also by Captains Bagot, Sawle, Crosbie, Hon. T. Scott, etc.; Dublin city by Messrs. Robertson, D'Arcy, Burke, and others. The Curragh and Newbridge sent detachments from the R.H.A., among them Messrs. Costobadie, Knox, and MacDonald; from the 7th Dragoons, headed by Major Dent, well mounted as usual; from the 4th Foot, and, I think, the 75th of the Line, etc. The half-crown business transacted, the chariots and horsemen, according to time-honoured custom, entered the gates of Kerdiffstown, had a pleasant drive through its avenue and park, and the usual marshalling took place in the large field opposite the usually good holding gorse that Mr. Hendrick watches over so vigilantly and well. Great expectations and suspense for a quarter of an hour! Then the trumpet blasts make us turn our horses' heads round. We are soon in the neighbouring park of Palmerstown, but no foxes roam its plantations to-day! Then we begin to ascend a mild gradient till we are once more enacting the part of vedettes, while the hounds explore the greeneries of Arthurstown below us—formerly the pride and boast of Kildare, now much fallen from its high estate. This is getting

really serious when luck deserts us in the odd number. Remains Eadestown the never-failing! Nor was the proud nuncupation a misnomer. In ten minutes or less the two narrow gates at either corner are crowded—those near either get about a small field's start of those worse posted—and the hounds are racing! A few small obstacles—a dozen fields of rather poor grass land, and none the heavier, or scarcely the heavier or more holding, from the recent rains—and we are entering the well-known Punchestown arena; only we are reversing the track, and running left-handed instead of right—up the hill towards the stand, instead of down past it. In a minute or two we are on the edge of the almost equally famous Punchestown Gorse, and those who have got away fairly well from Eadestown can look back upon the tail men cantering and galloping up. Here is a gentleman whose lines are cast in the law courts of Dublin. A flight of high and stiff hurdles is in front of his path; he charges them right gallantly; but whether his horse swerved or jumped extra big, the rider is supine on the right side, and, as somebody quaintly observed, his head executed a deed poll on the ground, his corpus an indenture. The said gentleman I saw afterwards charging the biggest obstacles to be met with, as if a fall were merely a stimulus to his enterprise. "Hold up!" says a gallant Saxon, evidently a soldier, to his hunter, as he gets on to the top of a bank. The horse evidently does *not* understand the injunction; for he plunges incontinent into the ditch (luckily, a dry one), and it taxes his rider's hand, seat, and nerve severely to save a fall. A loose horse or two may be seen about, I believe; but scent is very good, and the half-hour's respite, or at least a quarter's, which most foxes on most days can, with, perhaps, one or two followers, count on in this strong thick gorse, is to-day cut down to seven or eight minutes. Away we go, past the grand stand, over the old "Downshire course wall" (a three-foot gap, be it understood, presents itself in the middle), across the Rathmore road, as if for Cradoxtown or Tipper, then a swing to the left leads us over

another road from Naas to Punchestown, while a few light-riding grass fields and scrambling banks bring us into Killashee, Mr. Richard Moore's park, over which the hounds run fast; then we cross the Naas and Dunlavin road, enter Mr. Kearney's extensive fields at Rathasker—where there used to be a breeding earth by the old castle, I believe—run over some rather swampy fields, where a boundary double makes a call on a tired horse's powers; and presently, having got over a by-road, we are in Mr. Fay's farm, and we hear who-whoop! who-whoop! at a bank and ditch where I have seen a fox take sanctuary before to-day. At this point, being well-nigh twenty miles from my stable, I turned homewards, thinking all was over, when, looking back, I saw men riding again! so the fox must have only tried this sewer or drain. Slowly, but without much hesitation, the hounds now hunt on to Newlands, Mr. FitzPatrick's residence, and by his farm-yard there is a pause of a few minutes, which the owner begs the large field to utilize in tasting his hospitality; but the break is only momentary—away the hounds hurry on towards Herbertstown.

The Ward Union hounds continue their unchequered career of brilliant sport. The meeting-place on Wednesday, the 17th, was the Black Bull (*stat nominis umbra*), and in addition to the faces one generally sees at these assemblies there was a small knot of hard-riding Meath men, whose occupation, so far as fox-hunting is concerned, is gone till Friday next. Among them were Lord Langford, Mr. W. Butler, the Messrs. Murphy, Mr. Trotter, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Metge, Captain Peter Lowe, Mr. Hone, Mr. M'Gerr; Kildare supplied a few representatives, Louth one or two, Limerick the same. There was a coach-load of Inniskillings and 3rd Dragoon Guards, one or two of the Rifle Brigade, and Dublin mustered strong to a very favourite and accessible fixture, some ten miles of Irish measurement from the General Post-Office. The deer selected for this pursuit was rather a celebrity, as this year he gave about the longest chase of the season, which ended at Garradice, and hopes were high that the gallop of this afternoon

MRS STEWART DUCKETT.

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would be in no way inferior. In length it was very inferior, but the pace for a few miles was very good and continuous; but I anticipate. The red deer was unlucky at the outset, for, enlarged not far from the meeting-place, he was coursed for some fields by a sheep-dog, and this no doubt spoilt the first stage of our gallop—for in the first mile we had a long check; then crossing the Dunboyne road, we got jammed and entangled in a sort of network or prison of rails, wire, and water, which took up a few moments, and might have been fatal to seeing anything further of the pursuit. But up to this our quarry took things very leisurely, going down by Wood Park and its brook; then turning to the left, recrossing the Dunboyne road, and presently holding a course over the Ratoath road by Loughlinstown, Mullinam, and Ballyhack, it led us over a very perfect grass line, widely fenced, but where, with a very few exceptions, you could clap on steam at every obstacle, and never think of the safety-valve. Inclining to the right, the track takes us to the well-known Kilrue cross-roads, a very celebrated meet for this pack, and thence by Beltrasna to a point in the Ashbourne road, soon after which the road was substituted for the pastures, and a capture was effected beyond Fleenstown. The cream of the gallop was, I should think, about five miles over a line nearly good enough for any modern steeplechase, very superior to many courses patronized a generation or two gone by. There were falls and loose horses, but no bones broken or horses injured, and the half-hour or forty minutes occupied by the brightest portion of the chase was deliciously warm, the sun shining out radiant and serene after some very heavy forenoon showers. A very hard welter-weight owed an involuntary cold bath to some concealed wire, which turned his hunter over into a brook. The invisible wire is so rare in this country that I mention the circumstance. A pillar of the Irish turf became for the nonce a pillar of Irish mud, while his place in the alphabet of pursuit, generally nigh Alpha, waxed by this misadventure nigher to Omega. We make a vast pother about our rains and

floods here; but really what are ours in comparison to your experiences in the Thames and other valleys? Yesterday the nephew of an old friend, who held the horn once in England, told me that his uncle was recently asked to go to a ball, and when his station was reached and the brougham was expected, lo, a boat and a ferryman were sent to bring him to his destination!

Mr. Hamilton Stubber is, I hear, showing very fine sport in the Queen's County, one sample of which I sent you in the merest outline last week. A pursuer who graduated with Mr. Tailby, told me that on Monday last he had a wonderfully pleasant gallop with this pack, which showed very high hunting form. I am not quite certain about the accuracy of my memory, but I give a sketch of the pursuit, subject to any amount of correction. Finding at Orchard Gorse, they hunted their fox to a sewer near Luggnacurran village. Whether the fox emerged from his hiding-place when the hounds were taken away is not ascertained, but soon the hounds dragged on a line into Corbally Covert, and from it sent a fox over a range of hills flat at the top and covered with short grass, where there is a long-stretching gallop of nearly three miles, broken only by two flying walls, or walls that can be flown in a horse's stride. After this the fox got into a thorn and hazel scrub which clothes a hill known as The Banker, from which he was pushed into a new plantation of Captain Cosby's, and when he broke again it was to run over the Old Hill, gallop once more its walls, and get to ground not far from his original starting-place; from this he was bolted, and soon after rolled over by the pack, who had deserved him well.

Thursday, the 18th, was marked by almost heavier rain than we have been blessed with hitherto this year. As a matter of fact, there was no hunting of fox, hare, or stag within a very wide radius of the metropolis, and, if the evening corresponds to the forenoon, hunting in such a diluvial downpour would be a very mixed delight. I met a very weather and water-proof pursuer, who told me he started for "The Grange" (Kildare hounds), but was

driven back by the gushing rain. The evening was tolerably fine, and so warm and muggy that I should not be surprised to hear of one or two brilliant hound passages and beaten fields.

The chronicle of hunting events would be incomplete were we to pass over "Sam" Reynell's funeral *sub silentio*. Much of hunting Ireland found its way to the churchyard shade at Reynella, as a glance at the following names will show: The Earls of Howth and Clonmell, Lords Langford and Greville, the Hon. Charles and Harry Bourke, Mr. Waller, the Hon. E. Preston, Lieut.-Colonel Fraser, V.C., Mr. J. L. Naper, Major Naper, Captain Hartopp, Mr. Dunville, Captain P. Lowe, Captain J. M'Calmont, Mr. Macdonald Moreton, Messrs. F. and M. Chapman, Mr. R. Malone, Mr. Mervyn Pratt, Mr. Pepper, Mr. Rothwell, Mr. S. Garnett, Captain Kearney, Major Donaldson. Some nine of the above list have been masters of hounds. There were also a great many of the peasantry present—

> "His saltem accumulem donis et fungar inani
> Munere."

The harrier interest has been very triumphant during the last week or ten days. Besides Mr. G. Brook's and the Newbridge pack that I alluded to, the Queen's Bays have had two very good runs of an hour and an hour and a half from Garryroan, and earlier in the month I had a very meritorious performance by Mr. Carey Reeves's hare-hounds.

On Friday, the 19th, the Meath hounds recommenced hunting at Philpotstown, in weather most hostile to sport. I hear the show of foxes at Churchtown, Meadstown, and, in fact, *passim*, was very good; but their ways were ringing ways, and nothing very decisive took place.

I hear the Curraghmore hounds had a very fast thirty-five minutes from Lane Fox's Gorse on Tuesday last, ending in a kill. The track was through Carriganard, Grace Dieu, and Firmon, in the direction of Waterford.

On Friday, the 12th, the Kilkenny hounds were interrupted in their career by Mr. Ponsonby Barker's death, but Colonel Chaplin improvised a by-Saturday at Windgap, which brought a good many hunting men together. Davis's Gorse furnished a good fox, who ran by Marsh's Gorse, through Mr. Morris Reade's plantations at Rossenarra, into Castle Morres, where he was rolled over after a pleasant fifty minutes. On Monday, the 15th, they were at the fifth mile-stone on the Dublin road, and had a short gallop to ground at Gowran from Flagmount; and an evening run from Bishop's Lough, through Blanchardstown, by the chapel of Pitt, into Clifden Bottoms, where the hounds were stopped, owing to the approach of night.

On Thursday last the Kildare hounds were at the Grange village. The morning was one that would have daunted even an intrepid pursuer. The afternoon cleared, and the small party who awaited the course of events were not disappointed, even if they saw nothing very brilliant. Knockrigg Gorse, the first venture, sent forth a good fox, who, selecting the drier side of his grounds for breaking, ran by the Rath, and all but up to the Parsonage, where he was headed back, and his new direction was for Ballyhook, across the well-known and much-dreaded bog drain of grimy notoriety. Here the hounds got a good lead, for the field had to quest about for a crossing, which they at last found; and presently came another flooded drain not far from Ballynure, which only one or two managed to cross successfully. The fox now brushes by Ballyhook Gorse on his way to Saunder's Grove; but bending to the right, as if he meant to complete the circle, he saw an open drain or sewer in Griffinstown, and into it he crept. By all accounts, this was a good hounds' run; the field had a stern chase. Matt Conran's Gorse and Ballintaggart were non-holders to-day; but Hatfield the inexhaustible provided a runner, who started off as if for Halverstown, then turned to the right, and made the Bowery (here the field were compelled to trust to the Dunlavin road for the most

part, owing to the flooding of the swampy lands around) ran through it, and worked his way to Logatrina, crossed the Naas road, and was lost not far from Cryhelp. Pace latterly was not, I hear, very good.

On Saturday, the Ward Union hounds were for the second time flooded out of their country; so they—or their followers rather, to be precise—threw in their lot with the Kildare hounds, who met at Rathcoole, some eight miles from Dublin. The field was enormous; the day was fine. Foxes proved conspicuously absent from sight or smell till near two o'clock, when a Johnstown Kennedy fox (or a visitor, at any rate) started off at top speed for the hills under which it nestles; ran very nearly to the Saggart reservoir; and brushed past Gouchers, and ultimately made Tinode, where he was rattled about for some time. A fresh fox (as supposed) then started up before the pack, and led them towards Kilteel, getting into a hole or burrow half a mile or so from the Kilteel road.

Mr. Humphrey's stag-hounds also stopped hunting last week, in tribute to Mr. Reynell's memory.

The Ward Union hounds had an exceptionally fine gallop on Wednesday, the 24th inst., which began by Bayton Park, and progressed by Batterstown Parsonage, Blackhall, "the Hatchet," Kilmore, Moynalvy, Culmullen, Warrenstown, till it finished at Dunshaughlin village. I propose to write in my next letter at length, and to notice, if space permits, the results of Monday's meeting of the Kildare hunting senate as well. Roughly speaking an M.F.H. who takes Kildare will have £1500 or £1600 per annum, a pack of hounds found, stables and kennels for his establishment, and his country kept.

XVI.

"What's that skirting the hill-side?
'Tis the fox'! I'll bet a hundred;
Forward, forward let us ride!"

Rathcoole rendezvous—Fine run from Johnstown Kennedy—Baytown.

THE outlook on Friday morning was on a semi-deluge and its natural consequences. On Saturday the *vis medicatrix naturæ*, to use the jargon of "the Faculty," had done wonders to dry up the surface waters and harden the crust of the pulpy, water-sodden earth. There had been a sharp frost during the night; the spiculæ of ice were on the roads and all around, while a lambent sun was glorifying everything with his bright far-reaching rays. The Kildare hounds met at Rathcoole, a village neither clean, comely, nor beautiful, but very ancient, which lies under the shadow of the Dublin and Wicklow ranges of hills. To-day it was glorious in colour, enlivened by the presence of several hundred horsemen and horsewomen, soldiers' drags, flashing sunlight, war horses innumerable, and all the pomp and pride and circumstance of war's image. Here were the lords of the soil, represented by the ducal and noble houses of Leinster, Clonmell, Cloncurry, Oranmore, Harewood, and I know not how many more. Here were the lords of no soil—lords of themselves, that heritage of woe according to Byron, but of that heritage to-day there were scant signs or tokens visible. Here were the lords of many horses, but masters peradventure of none, and side by side

with them the owner (it is Saturday) of a quiet unpretending nag horse, which somehow gets over and through a country, and does an odd bit of harness and hacking perhaps in addition. Here are good horse-masters and bad horse-masters, ladies riding, ladies driving in cars, phaetons, waggonettes, and croydons. It is a field day for garrison and staff, cavalry, artillery, and rifles; but no corps muster so strong as the Inniskillings, and no two majors are more effectively mounted than Major Gore and Major Billington of that sporting regiment—Major Gore's weight-carrier being a perfect picture of symmetrical strength; while for performance and handiness in crossing any sort of country with a steadying load Major Dent's grey hunter is, perhaps, unrivalled. Galway, Limerick, the Queen's County, Scotland, and a great many more portions of her Majesty's dominions, are here doughtily championed. It seems to every eye a day for best horses and best clothes. The enforced rest has perhaps restored the bloom on many an overdone hunter. The bright sun and clear air has evoked the brightest of purple togas. Suffice it to say now that it was a very bright, joyous scene, worthy the panegyric of the laureate of the chase:

> "When all around is gay—men, horses, dogs,
> And in each smiling countenance appears
> Fresh blooming health and universal joy."

The days are lengthening, and with them hunting licence; so I think it was considerably past eleven o'clock when we filed down into a miry, flooded lane-way, whence leathers and cords received many a slushy accolade. From this we emerge into wide green fields which bound Castlebagot Gorse; but, alas! the trumpet sounds. There is no fox on the premises, nor yet in the neighbouring shrubberies of Castlebagot House. I said the crowd was enormous; it contained a few perilous kickers—of course there were some *kickees*. Between holes, an odd fence or two, and such like causes, there was a small crop of disasters before we had visited the third covert (Twelfth Lock Gorse).

Alas! no luck in odd numbers to-day; it was empty, and foxless likewise.

One of the sights of the forenoon which we encountered in these progresses over the paths of Macadam was a large company of young Levites, probably enjoying a holiday ramble from Maynooth or some affiliated college, all wearing the biretta or black cap, which I suppose here, as in the case of the judge passing sentence, symbolises death to the world and its vanities. They were a fine stalwart regiment of manly looking young fellows, not much sicklied over with the pale cast of thought. If there were any ritualists in our *cortége*, they must have been highly edified by the ecclesiastical costume and hierophantic millinery. Perhaps a few of us thought of old Oxford days, when "Jack Adams, who coaches so well, set us down by the Royal Defiance at the door of the Mitre Hotel," with the assurance that, arrived at the steps of the Mitre, we were safe to get on in the Church; and when, to quote the same dear old supper-party ditty, known and sung of all men on the banks of Isis, we "flashed our top-boots in the slums." The next stage was a very long and dreary one by the uneven banks of the canal, called Grand, on the *lucus* principle, because no grandeur meets the eye along this dreary waterway. I should think we trotted along it for nearly three miles, perhaps more, till we came to a nice secluded bit of gorse known as Miss Gould's Gorse, the townland on which it stands being Loughtown. There is a curious coincidence about this gorse which it may not be out of place or impertinent to mention here. Sir Edward Kennedy, the then master of the Kildare hounds, saw that a gorse covert was very desirable in this locality; he applied to Miss Gould and her landlord, and was offered any field he chose to select. Having made his choice, and sowed it, the next step was to make an earth; and, on his visiting the place to make all the arrangements for the purpose, Sir Edward was accosted by an old man, who asked for the post of earth-stopper, urging that he had the best claim. "Why?" said Sir Edward.

"Because I was earth-stopper in your father Sir John's time; and this was the old covert, and here is the old earth!" It turned out perfectly true, and Sir Edward had only to re-open the old fox-haunt.

After very careful drawing, this place too was pronounced blank; and the next venture, a small screen near Lyons, was equally barren of result. By this time we had wandered over a great deal of country, and patrolled the highways and by-ways in anything but pleasant fashion—for this is the season of survey and inspection of roads, and the contractors have "fanged" them with any amount of newly broken stone. As a natural result, a good many desertions took place here; for Johnstown Kennedy, the next draw, is some distance, and hunting men, like generals, have to consider the retreating as well as the forward movement. Blackchurch Inn has a good fame for its cordials, I believe; at any rate, not a few stopped here to try. My business was to pay for a horse I had sent on the night before; and so busy were they, that five minutes, I should think, elapsed before I could find any one good-natured enough to receive my cash. I mention this circumstance to show how very quick the find and exodus of *the* fox of the day was. The inn is not five yards off the road, only a few hundred from the lower gate of Johnstown Kennedy; and five minutes, at a rough calculation, was about the time I lost sight of the pack, for I made my way into Sir Edward's park directly, but only to find that the hounds were streaming away towards the Coolmine Lodge. Well, what of that? 'Tis a sight one has seen many score of times. Foxes are too fond of their luxuries in Johnstown Kennedy to forsake its woods without at least one long ring. So I galloped with the ruck; but when we emerged at the Coolmine Lodge, oh, horror! no hounds were visible, but some twenty-five or thirty men were to be seen from half to a quarter of a mile ahead, climbing up the mountain-side at the best pace they could command. Now, say what you like, three-quarters of a mile bustling up an incline which begins with

the mild gradient of the Derby starting-point or the Bedford chasing-course finish (to use popular illustrations), but increases in steepness the higher you go, when hounds are beating you every yard, takes most of the "go" out of an average horse, and leaves a residuum of limpness and flaccidity not very desirable when ugly rotten banks, with the take-off and landing, rendered indistinct by reason of gorse or heather, are before you and inevitable. This was our fate, the fate of the *polloi*, as we emerged from the gateway. Some rode hard to a point to the left, hoping to catch the pack in Coolmine Gorse—they fared badly, I think; others, among whom were Lord Clonmell and the Hon. Charles Bourke, galloped along the high-road towards Kilteel, turned up a useful lane, and met the pack at a sort of lodge and plantation on the top of Slieve Thou Hill. The twenty-five men or thereabouts who had got well away with the hounds, were led by Major Dent, on a well-known grey, who had a lead of fully a hundred yards at one time. An inept minority, among whom I formed a unit, followed the pack in a sort of despairing way, with nothing to guide us; for once the leading division had dipped the hill, our clue was gone. Even at this stage a ragged fence or two had told its tale of loose horses—how many I cannot say, but I heard of several. It requires a good-hearted, good-winded, handy horse to stay near hounds in these latitudes. A ditch here; a narrow-backed stone-faced bank, obscured by gorse, there; a small wall; timber stuck in a gap—these are the impediments to your progress, and mostly at an angle dead against your hunter. Once on top of the hill, the riding becomes very light and springy; it is covered with a growth of ling and heather and one wonders why it is not peopled with black game. These are the near objects; the distant ones—very distant ones—are three or four men galloping; a few more at a long interval. When you look around you, horsemen seem to people the mountain aimless and objectless—perhaps they have not yet caught sight of the receding leaders. The hounds, meantime, after running very

near Coolmine Gorse, slipped off to the right, driving their fox towards Gouchers Gorse, but not giving him a chance of visiting it—save in spirit—as they pushed him along with a blazing scent up the reverse of the hill range, over the flat top, and so on with unslackened pace into Tinode Woods, through which he was rattled towards the Downshire; but his strength was not equal to the effort. He turned downwards, and ran past Mr. Cogan's residence, the hounds making the whole hillside resound with their melody, as we persevering plodders knew well to our encouragement. In a deep ravine a fresh fox (at least it is supposed he was a fresh one) was tallied away into the open, and the hounds were clapped on to him. For a quarter of a mile he ran the Kilteel road, the hounds working admirably in spite of the stampede in their rear, when he turned sharp to the right hand, crossed a few grass fields, and, who-whoop! he got to ground in a bank in the corner of a field. Whether there was a sewer or burrow there, I cannot say; for 'twixt myself and the pack, a few yards only distant, stretched a bank, not all too sound, at the far side of which was what some would call a ditch, others a quasi-nullah, and here I confess my mount declined any further risks on her own account or mine, perhaps prudently; but possibly her nerves, like my own, were shocked by what I saw—a young horse coming good pace to the bank, flying it, and then in mid-air just managing to kick back, and so save a bad fall in all probability.

This is a most imperfect version of a very fine fast run, and of the chase and escape of a very sporting bold fox, who it may be hoped will infuse his intrepid, straightforward ways into the race of vulps at Johnstown Kennedy. I saw nothing of it except the last little bit with what we suppose was a second fox. I fancy very few out of the original good starters stayed at all near the pack, while I hear not more than a dozen could be called within reasonable distance. Some hunters that I know to be good vale horses and safe fencers came down at these peculiar obstacles,

and a popular general officer looked in a perilous position for a moment or two, but got off all right. Kilteel—a very happy little hill covert, formed of a grove well lined with gorse—was drawn blank; and here a dispersion took place, not a few having, like myself, a long journey before them.

I forgot, in alluding to Friday, the 19th, in Meath, when they were at Philpotstown, encircled by brimming rivers, to mention that they killed a fox from Meadstown after a ring, and had a very sharp gallop from Tullaghnogue till stopped by darkness. On Saturday they had lots of hunting about the Loughcrew Hill and in Clonabray, but nothing very brilliant or decisive.

On Monday the flood ban was taken away from the brave Ward Union men, and a special train from the Broadstone took down a rather select field to the meeting-place, Batterstown station. There were one or two Kildare men out, a Louth man or two, a good many of the 3rd Dragoon Guards, and one or two Inniskillings, one or two Queen's Bays and 5th Dragoons, added to about the usual number of the members; Mr. Turbitt acting as the master. A fine run, which may roughly be described as to and from Culmullen, over a line of beautiful grass vale—say six miles in all—was spoilt by greyhounds and colleys, who cut in constantly, ruining scent and directness. Two colley dogs completely marred the first stage of the second chase by Parsonstown Manor; the second stage of thirty-five minutes was good.

I alluded to Mr. Hamilton Stubber's recent good sport, epitomising rather vaguely, I fear, one or two good pursuits I had heard of. On one of these occasions, when the hounds had just missed their prey, which they had well earned, the covert-keeper came on the scene, and when the master asked him for a spade or pickaxe, or something of the sort, declared that, so far from aiding in such vulpecidism, "he would kill the man who attempted to dig out the fox." Upon this Mr. Stubber took the mattock, went to work, dug up the fox himself, broke him up, and astonished the keeper. A master of hounds must sometimes be master of men. M.F.H.'s

are too often the involuntary slaves of some of their dependents, who assume airs of arrogance because they have much in the way of marring and making sport in their hands. An occasional strong lesson is not a bad thing.

On Wednesday last Mr. Filgate had a good hour with a fox from Stephenstown, killing in the open; a pleasant thirty-five minutes from Glyde Court, through Corballis and Kilmoony, to ground at Rathtrist.

On Friday, 19th, a good gallop from Greenhills, through Mosney, Corballis, and Ballygarth, died away as a storm came on; a second, from Dardistown, ended the same way.

Swainstown, the handsome residence of Mr. and Mrs. Preston, standing in rather extensive woodlands, was the meeting-place of the Meath hounds on Tuesday, the 23rd instant. It forms one of a sort of quadrilateral of parks and pleasaunces which beautify the fertile bit of vale through which the Meath line meanders (I cannot say rushes) quietly, so as to give the traveller ample scope to survey the beauties of Killeen (Lord Fingal's castle), Dunsany (Lord Dunsany's), and Warrenstown, on the far side of the metals. It is very near Kilmessan, a railway station. So, in spite of a very dirty morning, there was a very large accession of Garrison and Ward Union pursuers, while Upper and Lower Meath were in great force, and strong in cavalry. Kildare was championed by the Earl of Clonmell on Conrad, Mr. and Mrs. More O'Ferrall, Mr. Reeves, and one or two more; while among the visitors were Lord A. Lennox, the Hon. Mr. Harbord, Major Naper, Mr. Gordon, Captain Magennis, Mr. Rose, Captain Peterson, Captain O'Beirne, M.P. The ladies equitant formed a small troop, among whom were the Hon. Mrs. Donaldson, Mrs. Johnson, Miss Cruise, Mrs. Preston, Miss Coleridge, Mrs. Magennis, Mrs. Drake.

I said the day was a dirty one, in sailor's parlance; a landsman might say filthy. A strong south-easter was blowing a gale, while at intervals—at least, in the hour before the meet—the rain gushes came down heavily; they were lighter during the day.

Kilcarty Gorse is the *pièce de résistance* of this meet, and many, I think, came expressly to see it drawn. I believe such was the intention of Mr. Turbitt and a few of his friends, who hoped to get their gallop from it early, then post off to Kilbrue, where one of the best of the Ward Union red deer was reported as recently viewed, and for this purpose some drag hounds were posted at a convenient distance. This plan was prevented, first by Jem Brindley's arrival with the news of the red deer having decamped from the Kilbrue feeding grounds; secondly, by Kilcarty's holding no fox to-day. They had searched Swainstown woods and plantations in vain previously. A fox turned up at the third venture in a plantation which forms one of the boundaries of Dunsany Park. The hounds started on capital terms with him, and ran him very fast and musically across some grassy stretches with a small intervening brook, which afforded some fun; but scent was most flickering and changeful, and in twenty minutes or twenty-five this fox was hopelessly lost. The Hill of Glaine seemed full of the much-desired quadruped, and one for a moment led to hopes of a run, as he faced outwards for Culmullen in the teeth of the gale; but he too in a very short time turned parkwards, and baffled the pack. We were now, I believe, fairly *en route* for the open country, when a fox turned up in a skirting wood belonging to Killeen, and he was rattled up and down (scent, strangely enough, seeming just as good among the trees as outside), and forced across the Dunshaughlin road, only to be lost in his turn. We are now by the verge of Gerrardstown Gorse, a large safe double in front of us, every one at attention, and with his spot picked out for a quick start. Before us are fine wide grassy fields, over which we strided a fortnight ago in pursuit of the Corbalton fox; behind, at a distance of half a mile or so, the chain of parks and plantations through which we had been cub-hunting with very poor result all the morning. Every chance of the open was given our fox, whom we had just heard of; every chance seemed against his running parkways. But his motives were not in accord with ours; so,

crossing the Trim road, he got back to the woods; and there I left them, having a lame horse or a tender horse under me, and not caring for a repetition of the earlier experiences of the day. They took the fox very fast to Corbalton, I heard since.

The Upper Meath men were very jubilant over a capital day's sport which they had yesterday, of which I fear I can only give a meagre sketch. The meeting-place was Slane, the village by Lord Conyngham's fine park and castle of the same name. The coverts were full of foxes, and one forced out seemed inclined to make Grange Geath Gorse; but, perhaps fearing the ascent, he held on by Hussey's Gorse and Tankardstown, and was rolled over in the open near the latter place, after a very long and persevering chase. "The Graigs" furnished the second fox, who led hounds and horses at a most stretching pace for eighteen minutes through Stackallan, over Barstone Hill by Slane, and then ran for some distance over the line of the morning fox, when he got to ground in a burrow. Scent, specially in the afternoon hours, was pronounced very good; the country, too, rode far lighter than on the Dublin side of the county.

"Oh, for a muse of fire!" says our great dramatic poet, "that should ascend the highest heav'n of inspiration"—or invention—which was it? Oh, for an observing eye! says your scribe, and the power of reproducing, even faintly and dimly, a photograph of a magnificent chase which the Ward Union hounds have just had. No colouring, no embellishment, is required; a tithe part of the bare unsophisticated reality would be enough to set the imaginations of those who love to ride for eight or ten miles straight over peerless pastures, unprofaned by the plough for many a generation; over wide fair fences, where on a good hunter—a real workman—you can go almost recklessly at the first place that presents itself in the line of obstacle, and then, if you think you have three or four more miles in hand, you will find five or six companions in your wild ecstacy, a streaming pack, and a deer with some "go" left still in its agile frame and unchoked lungs in front of you.

He is not magnifying a pursuit which he saw well himself, or was fortunate in; on the contrary, it was his lot to get into the very first ditch, having charged a wide spot with perhaps insufficient energy, and, as extrication involves a few very precious seconds, a stern receding chase. Men and horses succumbing totally after a few miles, some plodding on perseveringly, most abandoning pursuit after seven or eight miles had been compassed—these were the sights which his eye took in as he strained it to make out the path of pursuit, and to get some idea of the vicissitudes and the geography.

Those who travel by the Meath line, if they have any hunting fire in their composition, must be attracted by the wide and vividly green fields which stretch away to the horizon on either side of the metals, unarrested by any chain or barrier of hill, lake, or sea, though every here and there the land seems to swell into gentle undulations; and these in this flat land they call hills, because they give an immense command of survey and vision. It is a very rare thing hereabouts to meet a ploughed field. The land is worth (I speak roughly) some £5 round by the statute acre, and many would be glad to take any amount of it, I believe, at that figure. For many a square mile this pastoral land is entirely free from anything like clusters of parks or woodlands. It is devoted to cattle mainly; it is strongly and deeply fenced, but the fences are fair and untrappy, and for the most part singles. A few farmhouses dot it about, and a few herds' cottages; an old chapel and church rear their modest forms in the landscape; otherwise it is a wilderness of grass; nearly treeless, with strong quick hedges to shelter the stock.

The Ward Union hounds rendezvoused at Baytown Park on the 24th, a nearly treeless park, the *nominis umbra* being almost the only appreciable shade to be met with. It is about a couple of miles from Dunboyne, and twelve English, to calculate roughly, from the metropolis. The coach of the 3rd Dragoon Guards brought a fair number of soldiers from Dublin—dragoons, rifle-

men, staff, and artillery. Lord Langford came from Summerhill; Mr. Rose, of Limerick, from Dublin; while Messrs. Macneil, Tuthill, Murphy, Davis, M'Gerr, Butler, Morris, etc., are more or less connected with the neighbourhood. The majority of the other pursuers, some thirty or forty, hailed from Dublin city. Mr. Turbitt was the acting master of the ceremonies; but there was little preliminary preparation. The deer was enlarged very near the meeting-place, on the way to *Vesington* (to be topographical), and the hounds started off with a head which looked like a fast gallop. A wide ditch, some eight or ten feet broad, hairy and deep, is the first obstacle. A few got over the first spot charged; a few hesitate, one or two get in, the majority flank it; pace is good. It is rather more than a mile to Batterstown Parsonage, and here we jump into a laneway, which, in a few hundred yards, leads us towards Ballymaglasson and Blackhall. There is a momentary pause here. Then the line leads on straight, and most intelligibly, on towards "the Hatchet"—a celebrated Meath fixture, keeping parallel to the Dunboyne road. For two or three miles the even flat tenor is held on, when the land begins to rise a little as we pass Mr. M'Gerr's farm, and rise the celebrated hill of the Mullagh, a great low grassy wart on the smooth face of nature, which commands a very wide prospect; a mile or two more brings us past Kilmore Parsonage, and the chase appears holding on for Summerhill, Lord Langford's park, some three or four miles westwards; but presently our deer bends by Moynalvey chapel (the field was here reduced by desertions, falls, accidents, lost shoes, and what not, to very small proportions indeed), brushes past Beltrasna Gorse, to ascend another slight gradient (but how it told!) to Culmullen. Then once more it is downhill, and it leads on to Warrenstown village; then by the outskirts of Dunsany (here are two phases of the royal sport, for we were in this district yesterday) to Drumree station. Then in a few moments followed the capture, at a point very near Dunshaughlin village. Messrs. M'Gerr and Fitzgerald were, I believe, the nighest during the last

stages of the run; and, as Mr. M'Gerr started in front, it is a fair inference, judging by what one sees of his riding habitually, that he was in a forward position all through. With these two were Messrs. Wardrop, Waldron, Rose, Hone, and one or two more; while Mr. Murphy (on Sapling) and Mr. W. Butler were in the van for some distance. Many had stopped, or been forced to stop, four, five, and perhaps six miles from the finish; and this tells its tale to people who know anything about hunting when I add that there was not a single sensational jump—no eighteen feet of deep water, no stiff timber barrier, no masonry wall; the fences were large and fair all through; but pace, distance, and occasional rising ground told their tale on slack condition and flaws in the ancestral tree. It is a bold assertion to make, but I do not think such a run possible in any other part of the three kingdoms—certainly not in any portion of "the shires" within my experience. I should estimate it at over a dozen miles, nor do I think the hour was very much exceeded; but I did not time the run, and I speak by conjecture, though not quite without data.

On Tuesday last the Kildare hounds met a fairly large field at Sallins in storm and tempest. Bellavilla Gorse furnished a fox, who ran through Longtown into Firmount, then shaped his course along the boundaries of these two places, and, inclining to the left hand through Killibegs, made Downings, where he found sanctuary in the root of an old ash tree, which has long been a fox nursery. It was a fast twenty minutes over a rather nasty line of country. The wild gorse of Gingerstown (Castle Keely failing to hold) supplied the second runner. He made his point for Landenstown, and reached it in sixteen minutes of galloping pace; and here he got a few moments' breathing space, when he started for Donore, but, headed after a few fields, ran by Castle Keely back to Landenstown, where he was rolled over. Grief and dirt were very conspicuous after this last scurry, which lay through rather swampy lands.

The Kilkenny hounds are, by all accounts, doing full justice

to the stout old foxes for which the county has long been famous. Thus, on Wednesday, the 17th, they met at Knocktopher, when Sir James and Lady Langrishe were the hosts, the field the guests, at a hunting breakfast. Kiltorkan Gorse supplied the fox of the day; he skirted Coolmine, Sir John's Gorse, Knockmilan, and Firgrove, ran back to Kiltorkan, and was killed close by Sir John's Gorse after an hour and a quarter. On Friday a ring from the "Rock" was rather below the Freshford average, where they met. On Monday, the 22nd, they were at Jenkinstown, the park of Mr. George Bryan, one of the county members, beyond which to the north'ard there is some fine wild country. After some woodland work they drew Dunmore Park, Lord Ormonde's covert, found, and had a sharp ring, then a quick scurry over Mr. Doyle's farm, killing their fox when he was apparently bound for Castlecomer Coverts.

Kildare is still masterless—the horn is within the grasp of a competent stranger. A *quasi* competitive examination as to qualifications of head and heart, purse and person, venatic vocation and experience will be instituted. Among the examiners will be Lords Drogheda and Clonmell. It is the first time that the office has been open, for hitherto the succession has been most strictly limited to countrymen, and the new expansion of liberal ideas in this direction is due, I rather think, more to a combination of circumstances than to any new difficulties in a master's path, or any diminution of the credit attached thereto. Ideas are apt to take involuntarily a financial turn at this season, when reflection follows festivity, and tradesmen, with "the first, second, and third of this tenor," are apt to draw the pensive mind in this direction. The tergiversation of the Turks—those terrible Turks!—"the wisdom of the Egyptians," will not be lost on us as a nation if we follow steadily on the path of prudence and retrenchment on which we have entered, even in Kildare. I throw it out as a suggestion that candidates for the office should be invited to enter horses for the annual red-coat race which winds up the Kildare

season, and that a decided preference should be given to what one may call a double first—the man who wins in both classes, the 14 stone and the 12 stone. Among the possible masters for Kildare, I hear Lord Shannon and Captain Cosby mentioned. Their hunting antecedents are too well known for me to allude to them now.

On Friday, the Westmeath hounds had a very fair day's sport from Drumcree and Hope's Gorse, to which I may refer by-and-by. The last run was very promising till a colley dog intervened and marred it.

On Saturday the Ward Union hounds were neither very happy in their country nor their quarry; while on Monday their efforts to hunt in tempest were not crowned with the success which often attends enterprise and adventure.

The Kildare hounds had a very long hunting run on Saturday from Cryhelp, followed by a very quick burst from the Blackthorns, which was continuously good as long as light lasted. On the 24th, Mr. Filgate, after drawing Beaulieu and Newtown both blank, found at Castlecoe, and had a very sharp quarter of an hour by Colistoun, and by the shore behind Rath into Newtown; from the latter they forced him away into Blackhall, where he got to ground in a rabbit hole. Nearly forty minutes, all told. A second fox turned up in Blackhall; he ran round the park first, then crossed the railway by Drumshallon, left Rokeby on the left, and again crossed the rails by Carrickbogget; and, racing past Walshestown chapel, took a line straight to the hill of Almondstown. Up to this the hounds had never checked, but here they probably changed foxes, taking one on to the strand at Ryndstown, when light failed, though the fox, dead beat, was just in front of them. On Friday, the 26th, they met at Collon, but did not find till they reached Tenure Gorse, the fox taking them a splendid line to Mullerry, where he got to ground under the old church. Finding at Painstown, they took their fox across the Ardee racecourse, then by Dromina into Dunleer Court, thence to Rathescar and across to Collon, when a badly stopped earth saved him, after running for one hour and a quarter.

XVII.

"Many a day from yonder spinney, in November moist and chill,
Have I seen the wily animal steal slowly up the hill."

The fox in ambush—"The Ward" at the eighth mile-stone—Snow and storm—Drumcree—Brannoxtown—Pageant at Abbotstown.

I HAVE been spending some short intervals between hunting in studying something of the natural history of fox life. Any one who has observed a chained fox for any time will have seen how keen he is in watching the birds within his purview—or within his pad-reach, to be more exact—no cat is stealthier or quicker in striking; a pigeon has a poor chance within chain limit. Now, close to my back lodge there is a small field of cow-cabbage, which, till the quice or wood-quests of the neighbourhood swooped down upon them (like locusts in Kansas), were most healthy of heart, and vigorous and round of girth; now they are picked as bare as the Monument, except in a few spots. Whenever I put a pointer into this field he stands rigid, and up jumps a splendid old dog-fox, red as a rose and bushy of brush, within a few yards. Now this fox must I think have followed the quice, and must have been lying in ambush for them among the few uneaten cabbages; for the field in question is bounded by a broad, sunny bank, full of gorse, grass, and warm lying; nor do I think he would persist in staying in the plough for any less motive after having been disturbed by man and dog. The quice

are exceedingly numerous, and the mischief they have done is very great. I should think a judicious fox watching his opportunity would have no difficulty in making his right and left.

Having enlarged upon one or two very brilliant hunting passages which came under my ken, I fear I have omitted not a few moderate days with the fashionable packs within reach of the metropolis. Some of these may be dismissed in a very few lines. Thus, the Meath hounds at Trim on Friday last excited any amount of eager hope and expectation in many bosoms; but the swollen current of the Boyne arrested the tide of pursuit from Trimblestown, which up to this watery barrier had glided along very rapidly; nor did the evening's hunting from Clifton Lodge (Tullaghanogue being foxless) make amends for the early disappointment.

The Queen's Bays' harriers continue to keep the neighbourhood of Cahir and their masters very well occupied, as they find the hares of the county very stout and inclined to run straight; one on Thursday last only succumbed after four miles' straight going at good trying pace.

On Saturday I followed the precept of the wise in their generation in wooing fortune, namely, to follow on my luck—Wednesday's luck—for, say what you will, there is much luck in hunting. Misfortunes, says the bard of Avon, seldom come in single spies, but in battalions; so a victorious and successful pack of hounds often throws in for several good things in rapid succession; while a demoralized, baffled, and dispirited pack not seldom makes a long repetition of bad days, till something or other brings a reaction and turns the tide. The Ward Union hounds were announced as meeting at the eighth mile-stone on the Dublin road; and, sooth to say, a very large section of hunting Dublin turned out to welcome Charley and Jem Brindley and their favourites; one of the brightest days of the season, when in the clear cold air of the afternoon every object in nature gleamed forth with an almost pre-Raphaelite distinctiveness. It is no

wonder that soldiers and citizens, men of peace and men of war, men of commerce, and men of technical learning, sons of Mars, Themis, Esculapius, and I know not how many more Pagan divinities, and daughters of Diana in carriages and habits swelled the throng of pursuit, which was not confined by any means to Dublin and its Garrison, for Captain Trotter was there from Navan, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy from Culmullen, Mr. and Miss Hussey, Mr. W. Butler, Captain O'Beirne, M.P., and several others whom one sees in the fox-hunting array; while among the crowd were one or two horses of public fame, such as Fairy Queen, and one or two men who have stamped themselves as capable horsemen between the flags. Clock-like punctuality seems to mark the Ward Union movements, and, indeed, any slackness in this respect, considering that the meets are fixed for the easy time of 1.15, would in these short days be very dangerous. A by-road, down which we wound past the chapel of Donoughmore, brought us to a place called Miltown—not much of a misnomer, because, if there were no mill actually *in esse* there, there were brooks hard by which might be utilized to any extent.

The moment we got inside a gateway, near a house in ruins, the hounds began to run fast; but in five or six minutes they came back very nearly to their starting-point, and then commenced the pursuit in real earnest; it led us fairly straight for about a mile, and perhaps a half in addition, over some widish but fair fences, when, between mistakes and cannons, an odd loose horse might be picked up, and a man, tired of bay, might turn to chestnut. Robertstown is our next stage, and, crossing the road by a small wall, we are in a valley watered by the Fieldstown brook. It is bounded by a wire fence; but the wire is open in spots, and so we pass through, not without delay, while the hounds are topping a gorsy hill in front of us, looking as if we are in fox pursuit. Soon we come to a very miry laneway, with strong quick hedges on either side. It has one or two passes;

but if you miss these, and fancy you can find something better higher up or lower down, you are doomed to a stern chase, perhaps never to catch the flying pack till they reach the seaboard, a few miles to the eastward. Such was not the fate of any to-day; for the deer, after running to Fieldstown, turned backwards, and shaping a course towards Palmerstown, got back to a point near Ashbourne, where a capture was made. The county to-day was not anything like so pleasant as the Ward Union deer have traversed recently—not so large, perhaps, but very irregular—with fences, of which some seemed impracticable to the ordinary calibre of hunters, and not reassuring at a glance to either man or horse. Few saw the run well after its earlier stages, and many falls marked its progress, among the supine being one or two of the very best-mounted men in this part of Ireland.

There was a project for an attempt on the liberty of an outlying deer at Kilbrew, but I hardly think it could have been executed; the distance and the little daylight remaining being strong arguments against carrying it out to-day.

Sir David Roche's pack has been showing fair sport, but without passages as brilliant as in the earlier part of the season till last week, when they found a good fox in Main Gorse, who led them a tremendous chase over the best part of their vale towards Ballingarry. He did not, however, enter this covert, but passed it on the right, pointing for Ahylin Wood; but neither did he enter this stronghold, but pushed on for some more distant goal, till the pack viewed him and rolled him over: a nine-mile point, probably twelve as the hounds ran. I regret I cannot give you the time, for it was not taken.

On Sunday I think even the poachers, with their greyhounds and curs, must have been beaten off by the hyperborean weather, which began with some smart volleys of hail and ended in a snowstorm, which was heavy enough to lie on the sodden and water-logged fields till everything was draped in white. By Monday a tempest of wind and rain had obliterated nearly every

vestige of snow, but hunting!—I write in the forenoon—no one but a hardened old Centaur would think of such a thing! And yet they did hunt! I write in the evening. The meet at Culmullen cross-roads is now a *fait accompli;* but Beckford was right, hunting in tempest is seldom stamped with success. I had no idea that snow, succeeded by sleet and gushing rain, could in twenty-four hours have flooded the country, which was just beginning to acknowledge the drying processes of the last four or five days' respite from rain and storm to the extent it has actually done. Not only has every field a small lacustrine system of its own, which makes an almost even division of the surface; but the roads are turned into canals in many places by the overflow of brooks and gorged conduits, and the driving wind lashed these canals and temporary water-ways into miniature billows and surf; the cattle and sheep were huddled together, cowering from the storm, wherever any shelter presented itself; and the rustics, when asked about the arrival of the hounds and the prospects of a chase seemed to question your sanity. However, come they did, with their wonted punctuality—for Ashbourne time, let me tell the reader, is practically equal to Greenwich time in its precision. I suppose the truth was that so sudden was the storm there was no time to countermand horses, boxes, etc.; and the fact of a special train leaving the Broadstone terminus every Monday made it imperative on the Brindleys to be there. Of course the field was small and select; but it comprised some of the hardest elements to be met with, among them being Lord Langford, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, the Messrs. Hone, Mr. Allen, etc. The red deer, when enlarged near the new chapel or church, sailed away with the wind on her quarter, through Cultromer, then turning to the left, gained the Cross Keys, and held on through Mr. Doyle's farm; then the Dublin road looked far too attractive to be passed by for holding fields, and along this track she continued till Batterstown station was reached, when the Meath line tempted her, and along this she ran in full view of the pack.

Drumcree, the residence of General the Hon. Leicester Curzon Smythe, was the meet of the West Meath hounds last Friday. Three foxes turned up in the gorse, and the hounds settling to one sent him along towards Winetown, where he was turned back and forced to run through Glanavea and Drumcree again; he then went away for Loughbawn, but was foiled once more in this impulse, and he again tried Winetown, but only to be again headed. He now made for Barbavilla, but when crossing the hill over Collinstown the hounds ran from scent to view, and rolled him over in the open close to Collinstown village. A good hunting run; one hour and twenty-five minutes, and the latter part of it was fast. They next found a brace in Hope's Gorse, and ran one of them fast over a good line towards Knock Ion Hill Gorse; but when within a mile of it a colley dog coursed the fox, and spoiled pursuit.

Hunting and steeplechasing are, in their best forms, supposed to be so closely allied, that it may not be out of place to comment for a moment on the programme of the Cambridgeshire steeplechase, which I see advertised in your last issue. The framers of the articles appear to me to have had one great object in view—the apportionment of prizes to animals capable of carrying men hunting, and not mere instruments of gambling, as so many of the metamorphosed chasers of the day really are, while the penalties and maiden allowances ought to attract good fields of well-bred hunting horses to catch the eyes of buyers. I do not know the Cottenham pastures; but, as nearly every English steeplechase course that I have seen is fully 10lbs. severer than the average of Irish tracts, here methinks is matter for reflection to stewards and promoters of the Irish *hunt* races.

Saturday, the 27th, was not only a very enjoyable day, but it yielded something more than an average of sport to the large numbers who met at the village of Brannoxtown, where three parks—Major Borrowes's, Mr. J. La Touche's, and Mr. Cramer Roberts's—converge. Moorhill, the first covert visited, yielded

no fox ! so a stage was made to Cryhelp Gorse, from which a fox, described as very small, broke and ran to the neighbouring gorse of Copelands (two miles distant, more or less) and back again, but by a different route. Then, forced a second time out of Cryhelp, he took a line towards Hollywood, and got round by rather a circuitous process to Copelands. The pace over the bottom lands, where scent lay warm, was, I hear, superb ; and *on dit* that a noble and hard-riding eloquent lord left a cast of his profile each side in the clay which lines the banks and ditches here. Another exodus from Copelands leads our vulp back to Cryhelp, where the covert-keeper intervened, and opened the earth for his stout little *protegé.* After three o'clock p.m. the Blackthorns at Harristown were drawn blank, when a fox was viewed stealing away. The hounds were laid on at once, *raced* him through Geganstown and Ardenode, and forced him across the Ballymore Eustace road, where his course lay over splendid old upland pastures, wide and large, into Moorhill ; hustled through the covert, he ran through Geganstown and the Blackthorns across Rochestown and the Dunlavin road, when he entered Sallymount, and here hounds were whipped off from want of light.

This must have been a very good day's sport by the strong and decided impression it left on the strangers and visitors. I did not see the fun myself, having been out with the Ward Union stag-hounds at an interval of many miles. Among the occurrences of the day was the fall of Kildare's best medium-weight (I think I express the general opinion of judges) at one of the many score of rotten, ragged, gorsy, crumbling banks, any of which are quite capable of upsetting an uneducated or half-educated hunter. His hunter got away from him, and was so full of "go" that, when *tracked,* he was found trying to jump the iron railings which protect the Ballynure churchyard, some six or seven miles distant from the scene of the catastrophe.

On Tuesday the Duke of Marlborough held his first *levée* in Dublin Castle, and to give heads of departments (as they used to

call them in the colonies) an opportunity of paying their devoirs to her Most Gracious Majesty's representative in Ireland. The temples of Themis were closed, and so were the fanes of Diana! Hunting is, as a rule, most Conservative in its politics. Take any field in England, and you will find a great majority, if red in habit, most blue of instinct. And yet the Liberals have a most decided supremacy in the knot of statesmen whom our Imperial sister has sent over to guide us in the paths of equity and justice. Against Lord Spencer, Lord Hartington, and Mr. Horsman I do not think the Tories can name a single name of Irish hunting eminence beyond Sir Michael Hicks Beach, our present Secretary. To be sure, one or two of the dailies here, with effusive loyalty overshadowing accuracy, made the Duke of Abercorn, our recent Lieutenant, a Nimrod. In spirit he may have been, in heart I believe he was one assuredly, but he never gained the accolade in Irish hunting fields. His sporting fame was won on a different arena.

"What shall my song be to-night, and the strain at *your* bidding shall flow?" sang the young lady at the piano, probably emphasizing the "*your*" if the right man be in the drawing-room. "Where shall my meet be to-morrow?" was my paraphrase of the melody on Tuesday, and if not exactly of mine, no doubt it was that of many vacillators and undecided in the metropolis of Ireland. I had made arrangements for visiting the Kildare hounds on Wednesday myself, so I will speak presently of what I saw in that county; but the Meath hounds were at Larracor, very accessible to pursuers in Dublin by railway to Trim; and, on the whole, I think I should give the preference to the average chances of sport from Larracor than from the coverts within reach of the eighteen mile-stone fixture, if for no other reason than that the field in the former would be considerably less than half that to be counted upon at the latter, which generally brings an army from Dublin, a legion from the Curragh and Newbridge, besides pursuers from the Queen's County, Carlow, and it may be from

Kilkenny; not to speak of the very large numbers whom the hospitable houses within a radius of four or five miles of Naas pour forth upon the thronged cross-roads at this very famous old fixture! I think rain *is* telling: we have struggled against it, we have become *quasi* acclimatized to it; but the last wetting, the last stable misfortune, has the same effect on the almost weather-proof, water-proof pursuer that the ultimate feather has on the camel's hump in the oriental apothegm. The meet was a *very small* one, the smallest, I think, I ever saw at this place in an experience of a few seasons. From before nine o'clock a.m., a deluge of rain set in, taking the place of frost which had ruled during the night; a strong west wind drove it in, and the whole westward horizon was surcharged with water. The Dublin division, who came by rail to Sallins, suffered comparatively little; but many of those who had ridden or driven long distances by road, looked externally as if an immersion or two in brook or ditch could affect the condition of their clothes very little. Under these circumstances it was not surprising to see good men and hard men turn homewards from the meeting-place, or when near it, for it did not look like sport in a very enjoyable form. And yet I fancied, seeing the weather they encountered last Monday, that a few Ward Union men would have shown at the meet, for they are once more, as somebody remarked, "*sus. per plu.*," which is a sort of apothecary's Latin abbreviation for "stopped by rain," their country being under the dominion of flood. They were, however, conspicuously absent. Dublin sent a strong detachment of her Garrison and Staff; among them Major Gore, Captains Bloomfield and Mills, and Mr. Thompson, of the Inniskillings, Captains Colthurst and Crosbie and Lord Clanmorris, of the Staff. Lord Oranmore and Captain Lascelles, too, came from the metropolis. The Curragh was represented by Captains Hanning-Lee and Montmorency of the Staff, Captain Middleton of the 4th, with sundry other soldier officers; while from "the hall" at the Curragh were Mr. Hubert Moore and Miss Moore, Mr. Garrett

Moore, Mr. Beasly, etc. Sir Erasmus Borrowes, who has not been hunting so much this season as usual, was on a good-looking, lengthy son of Canary's, a high-class-looking hunter all over. Mr. Dyke was a visitor from Cumberland, Mr. Adair and Mr. Skeffington Smyth came from the Queen's County; Kildare showed in smaller force than usual. Everything looked draggled and soaked. Those in Cording's complete armour seemed about the happiest, the hounds being huddled into a sort of ball, so that you could hardly guess that there were eighteen couples by the door of the little "pub" at the cross-road. With this attempt at describing our surrounding discomforts let me dismiss the preliminary business. Mr. Mansfield trotted us on sharply enough for a quarter of an hour, and then on either side of the road we have a long bit of narrow woodland; this is Dunstown Wood. The hounds had not been five minutes exploring the left side of the hollow-looking covert—which has been very prodigal of its fox blood—when a find was announced. A miry lane leads across it, and we are in this, thinking our fox is bound for Stonebrook; but a sharp turn has led him to the corner of the wood, and, if he meant Stonebrook at first, he now means it no longer. Outside is a wide extent of commonage, intersected by some drains and small brooks, where on a fine lark-provoking day you would be sure to see much schooling and "fancy" jumping. This is not a day for anything of the kind. Hounds are running fast, and there are gaps and bridges over everything jumpable, so on we go, till hounds pause at the far side of the common. On it is, up the shoulder of Mullacash Hill, or a little spur of that hill. Across the road, over a small wall, and there are the hounds all gathered together round a sewer where foxes are very fond of taking sanctuary when they can. Some jump back into the road, those near the sewer are galloping on fast. The fox has tried it, but finding it sealed has held on. Now hounds are racing over a bit of spongy bottom land, across a by-road, and on to Mr. Coffey's farm. Luckily, here there is another pause,

or the tail men could not have got up. The track is now by Mullaghboden Lands, leaving a most tempting covert of the Baron de Robeck's unvisited not more than a few hundred yards to the left. Here the soft ground and a large fence emptied a saddle or two. Now the Ballymore Eustace road is crossed, and we get into sound, hilly, upland grass, though some of the banks are still lined with snow drift. Presently we cross the Rathmore or Blessington road, and work on over a fine grass farm of Mr. Flood's—hounds begin running hard once more ; another parallel road is passed, and we are in the lands of Barrettstown Castle (Sir E. Borrowes's residence). Excelsior! The track is now rather steep, though the grass land rides light enough here. Soon we are on the verge of Russboro' (Lord Miltown's park) ; some of us now get hung up in a field, protected on one side by a high rugged bank, on the other by wire. The line meantime leads on towards Glending, crossing *the single bit of plough* I can recollect in the day's ride. Scent is failing and flickering ; the hounds, I think, dragged on to Russboro'. Practically the run concludes here, and it was really very good and animated in bits, surprisingly good and sustained, the weather and the storm being considered. Next we are overlooking Elverstown's magnificent area of gorse, of which a portion is cut down, though, to my eye, the covert still looks a very large one. A reluctant fox refuses to face the open. Home and hot water now occurs to most men. Among the curiosities of the day was a veritable twenty-seven-year old huntress, as fresh as a kitten, and pulling her rider hard on those steep hills where some of the young ones were quite sobered. I find I was in error about the sequel of Saturday last with the Ward Union stag-hounds. After the capture of the first deer, a small party, with Mr. Turbitt, went to look for the outlyer I referred to at Kibrew, found him by the fox-covert there, and ran him by Reisk Covert and Gallstown House to the Poor-house Gorse, thence by Parsonstown Manor to Crigmere and to the Hatchet, through Jenkinstown by Colierstown Covert to Mulhussey

Gorse, on by Mulhussey Castle, through Messrs. Chapman and M'Cormick's lands to Moyglare (Captain Tuthill's park), till he took refuge under the bridge of Moyglare, when the capture was safely effected at 5.30 p.m. (he was found at 3.35); hounds, I hear, had much the best of the long chase, some of which must have been ridden by moonlight.

Sport in Meath has *not* been good this week by all accounts. On that fearful Wednesday, when the Kildare hounds rendezvoused at the eighteen milestone, the Meath pack met at Larracor, but, owing to the storm, did not find till they got (rather late) to Rahinstown Gorse, from which they had a pleasant thirty-five minutes by Rathmolyon and the Bullring, over a tolerably good line of country for the district.

On Friday the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough held what I may call a hunting *levée* at Abbotstown, the spacious park of Mr. Ion Trant Hamilton, one of the county members. No fairer frame could have been selected for a really beautiful and imposing pageant. The Court looked very courtly; his grace's equipages were admirably turned out; there was a most imposing display of beauty most beautifully adorned. Dublin, civil, military, professional, and commercial formed a grand gallery for the raree show; luckily the overcast forenoon spared the glory of toilettes, the pride of Purple and Propert, the sheen of Hoby and Clarke. An hour or two afterwards there was a tremendous gush of rain, but by that time much of the carriage multitude had gone home to luncheon, etc. A short ineffective run from Kilrue Gorse, which introduced us to very large fencing, was all of sport. The tempestuous day produced a fatal accident to one of the best sportsmen in Ireland, Mr. Nicholas Archdale, whom I saw going —not once, but always—admirably on his grey hunter, and made it a very melancholy one for numbers.

I believe it is not premature to announce Mr. W. Forbes's succession to the vacant mastership of the Kildare hounds. That he has accepted the horn positively and finally I am not prepared

to state; but that the conference of the Kildare chiefs will end like the miserable *fiasco* we have recently sickened over in the Orient, I do *not* believe, as I feel assured that the county of Kildare will be too glad to meet the proposals and conditions which Mr. Forbes makes on his part. A very humble unit in the hunt, I think it is to be congratulated very much on the happy combination of circumstances which secure so very promising a president. No M.F.H. can guarantee sport to a country; but, as the Patrician said to Sempronius, "he can deserve it." This I am quite sure Mr. Forbes will do, and it will be very hard luck indeed if, when immense energy (*perfervidum Scotorum ingenium*), great experience, and a most intimate acquaintance with the unwritten laws, maxims, and cabala of hunting are added to entire devotion to the noble science, good results do not follow. Eighteen or twenty years ago Mr. Forbes was attracted to Kildare and its hunting grounds; he has been most staunch and unwavering in his allegiance ever since. Hence, though I do not think he has a patent of naturalization, he is, by popular vote and feeling, a Kildare man; no man in Ireland or England has been a better patron of sport legitimate, undefiled by gambling.

The Kildare hounds met at Courtown Gate on Saturday, the 3rd, and, as usual, the meeting-place was choke full, as well as the avenues leading to it. The hounds, thrown into the plantations in front of the house, found instantaneously, crossed the road, and raced for Laragh. Here, or just beyond it, there was a check of some moments, and then the chase is renewed slowly and fitfully to the Maynooth road, at which point it ends, so far as the field and the body of the pack are concerned. I believe what really happened was in this wise: The find was so quick that many men were taken by surprise, while not a few fell at a drop fence into the road coming out of the Courtown plantations. These discomfited men got somehow (I think by a parallel road, but I don't want to libel them or their hunters) to Laragh before the field or even the pack. At the check I referred to five couple

of hounds hit off the line for themselves, and ran *mutely* to the road ("silence," you know, "is the criterion of pace"), where a small body under the banners of Captain Ponsonby, Mr. F. Tynte, and Mr. Bellany, the latter on his capable roan horse, took charge of them, and had a capital run, as I hear, with only a single dwell by Taghadoe Gorse, into Cullen's Covert. Whether we changed foxes or not in the last gorse I cannot say, but a fox from it took us at capital pace over a nice line into Killadoon Lands, where scent seemed to fail. Castletown Woods did not hold a fox.

There has been capital sport in Kilkenny lately, from Killeen, Ballykeefe, Kilfane, Summerhill, and Butler's Wood, while the Curraghmore continue their triumphs, Kilcash and Early's Gorse keeping up their reputation for good foxes. I regret I can only refer to these packs just now.

P.S.—The Meath hounds had a very good day's sport on Tuesday, the 6th, from Somerville, or rather Walshe's Gorse and Kilmoon Sticks; while Mr. Preston's harriers (the Bellinter) gave a select field a most enjoyable hour and twenty-five minutes, killing a very tough hare after a most sustained chase, which led over Walterstown, Screen, and Tara Lands. By all accounts, this was a very fine run indeed.

XVIII.

"In the spring a fox's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love."

Abbotstown *levée*—Mr. Archdale's fate—"Snow-Storm"—Kilkenny and Queen's County sport—Philpotstown and Rathmore—West Meath.

I MUST perforce hark back to the beginning of spring—if spring really begins with the month of St. Valentine—dear to the young men and maidens whose thoughts lightly turn to thoughts of love, but abhorred by the polite postman. (Manners, you know, make the postman.) Ventose, pluviose, but not venaticose, if one may coin such a term, February Filldyke came in blustering and gushing, determined not to leave the wild work of January incomplete. The courtly ceremonials at the Castle, a first *levée* and drawing-room, brought quite a flock of M.F.H.'s to the metropolis of Ireland to pay the tribute of their loyalty and respect to her Most Gracious Majesty's representative at Dublin Castle; and to stimulate their zeal in this direction I feel inwardly assured that not a few causes gravitated mightily. Such an open season was perhaps never recollected, nor one wherein the strain on hunters was more continuously severe.

"Otium divos rogat impotenti prensus Ægæo."

"The M.F.H. he prays for frost,
Because his nags their bloom have lost,
And all his stable plans are cross'd."

I can fancy an M.F.H. under these painful circumstances summoning his huntsman and stud-groom to his study, and announcing his intention of visiting the capital and court of his country

for a few days. I can conceive the pathetic injunctions to his huntsman during his absence to be sparing of, and tender to, the remaining working lot; his passing a sort of short *ad interim* Factory Act to limit the working hours of his over-wrought establishment; his careful and precise directions about the drawing of the coverts, and so on. To be sure, all huntsmen have not obeyed Wolsey's injunction to Cromwell, "fling away ambition," and opportunity occasionally will dull the small voice of obedience; so I expected that possibly I might have heard of one or two extraordinary passages of hunting history during this semi-interregnum, but none have reached me so far. Another potent cause, I feel assured, to drive masters Dublinwards at this particular season was the lady vote—*noto quia fœmina possit.* Dublin doctors are celebrated, and country dulness and damp beget remittent spirits, to which only a course of medicine and millinery can minister. Add to all these inducements the great spring meetings, of which all M.F.H.'s nearly are *ex-officio* promoters, and forced to interest themselves in—throw in a few Castle balls and minor private dances—and the wonder will be, not that masters of hounds ever got away from their kennels and countries, but that they were able to return so quickly.

It would not be fair, I think, to the truth of hunting chronicle to pass over the magnificent hunting function which took place at Abbotstown on Friday, the 2nd inst., with the very meagre comments to which scanty space and time restricted my observations last week. Hunting—fox-hunting especially—is many-sided, and every side has its own attraction and charms for its votaries, just as, with changing light, every facet in a well-cut diamond sparkles and coruscates in turn. There is the sanguinary huntsman who thinks only of killing his foxes; there is the less bloodthirsty hunt servant, whose zeal fluctuates between the joy of pursuit and the ultimate triumph; there is the master, whose anxious mind has to dwell upon a thousand subjects in the course of the twenty-four hours, who has to be a little of all things to

all men and all women; there is the master who is a very Gallio to all minor matters so long as he can show sport, and who lives, moves, and has his being for this aim and object; there is the master who—*simplex munditiis*—abjures the pomp and vanities of hunting pageantry, who looks with an angry eye at crowds of carriages and hacks flocking to his meets, and occasionally arranges his fixtures rather with a view to the discomfiture of this element. The master of the Royal Meath hounds, be his idiosyncracy what it will, has no option in the matter, or scarcely any. Certain grooves and traditions bind him fast in invisible but very sensible chains, and one of these is that on certain high days he must bring his hounds to the neighbourhood of the metropolis, timing his fixture so as to fall in with the dates of drawing-rooms or court balls at the Castle, and that for a certain space of time he must manœuvre them before an immense audience or gallery composed of elements the most heterogeneous and incongruous. I suppose it is right that it should be so. Hunting lives in the affection of all classes; so it must be made generally popular and pleasing. The spectacular, gossiping, coffee-housing, pomp-and-pageantry side must have its innings occasionally. Luckily, it is seldom a long one; and, most fortunately for Meath, the same day often combines the morning pomp and parade of fine clothes and bravery of glorious apparel with real genuine sport in the afternoon or evening. It was not the case on the day I am now noticing. Last season it was quite usual, and considered a matter of course. The old saw tells us that "a rainbow at night is the shepherd's delight, a rainbow in the morning is the shepherd's warning;" and such a bow spanned the heavens magnificently as I rode into Abbotstown on Friday morning. A slight shower came down, and then everything looked fairly serene in Mr. Hamilton's fine park, where undulating grounds, large grassy spaces, fine old timber, and a system of springs and rivulets make a very pleasant and picturesque scene. There is a large space in front of the house, and presently it is

occupied by the outriders of the viceregal carriage, followed by the equipages of the Castle party, which includes the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, Lord and Lady Antrim, Lord R. Churchill, Lady Rosamond Churchill, Captain Kearney, Lord Clanmorris, Captain M'Calmont, Captain Colthurst, A.D.C., and Colonel Frank Forster, Master of the Horse.

A short distance off is the coach of the Inniskillings, driven by Captain Heaviside. Innumerable carriages are wandering about through the park, among the smartest of which are Mrs. Bagot's and Mr. Rose's. Abbotstown is not more than four miles from Dublin; so the Garrison in all its arms is there in great force. Kildare sends Lord Cloncurry, the Hon. E. Lawless, Mr. Forbes, General Irwin, Captain Saunders, and some others to represent her in the tournament. The morning is overcast, but warm withal, so there is a capital opportunity for lounging about among the Watteau-like groups of horse and carriage people—a very mixed multitude, civil, military, professional, commercial, histrionic. It is a conversazione *al fresco* and *à cheval* for half an hour, seeing that the train which brought the master, his hounds, and staff up to Dunboyne from Navan is late by that precise measure of time. Mr. Morrogh, the master of the Ward Union hounds, receives a perfect ovation on his re-appearance in public, driving his phaeton, after his severe accident —a broken leg—some seven or eight weeks ago.

But here come the pack at last! The woods of Abbotstown are drawn *pro formâ* (no fox could be expected to await his enemies so patiently while the coast was clear). Nothing is found, and presently the huge train, brilliant in colouring, moves along, churning the rotten roads into mud-butter, till we pull up at Holywood Rath, Mr. Thompson's residence, nearly always a sure find; and here fresh accessions to our numbers arrive, among them Lord Langford, Lord A. Lennox, the Hon. Mr. Harbord, Lord Rossmore, and the Hon. Mrs. Candy. The place is foxless to-day, but a hard-riding dragoon makes a little bit of

amusement for the spectators by a water jump *manqué*, where his horse, a candidate for cross-country honours, is immersed for a considerable time. The next stage is to Ballymacarney Gorse, where a fox was proclaimed, *chez lui* very soon, but a fierce rain and wind storm now came on with almost blinding violence; and, whether the fox got headed when he broke, as he did several times, or the weather daunted him, I cannot say. Certain it is that Mr. Waller, anxious to give us a gallop as quickly as he could to warm and dry us, led us on to Kilrue Gorse, leaving the sulky vulp master of the covert *pro tem.* There must have been a fine house at Kilrue at one time. A long causeway leads to it; there are extensive ruins, and round them for a considerable space runs an old moat, rather wide, with the masonry still complete. The gorse is about a quarter of a mile from these ruins. A very quick find, a bold start almost in the teeth of a gale, some very large fencing, hounds flashing over the scent, the fox forced back to sink the wind and scurry back to the gorse, some grief, more very large jumping—this was the first stage of our attempt at sport. It was followed by a second expulsion from the covert, a slow run over a succession of charming fences, with a brook or two, the direction being towards Ashbourne; and then the clue is hopelessly lost or blown away. I said there was very large jumping—nothing sensational, no single obstacle to go and look at afterwards, but every fence very wide, and one double which I saw a couple of men do, led by an officer of the 3rd Dragoons, was passing big. The Hon. Harry Bourke, mounted on The Lord-in-Waiting, showed us the way over a yawner or two, where a bold leader was a blessing. Where poor Mr. Archdale met his accident, I cannot say. I had been noticing the very fine fencing of his grey hunter a few minutes before, and in his resolute good hands such a catastrophe was the last thing I anticipated.

"Quod quisque vitet nusquam homini satis
Cautum est in horas. Navita Bosporum
Pœnus perhorrescit, neque ultra
Cæca timet aliunde fata."

I feel I have not done justice to the very splendid spectacle at Abbotstown; space and time forbid my enlarging on it. It combined something of a cross between a high-class English meet —say at Cottesbrook, after the Northampton meeting—and one or two features of Ascot. The show of horseflesh in the park was very fine, and alone well worth going to see. I cannot notice the hacks or hunters *seriatim* now, but a brown cob under Mr. Richard Walshe's welter-weight (Lady Patricia's owner) looked as if he would win ribands in the show-yard as well as give his rider some hunting.

Saturday, the 3rd inst., was ushered in by snow and sleet, which, of course, turned to the irrepressible rain during the course of the day. The temperature was very low, and there was a sting and bite in the wind, which every now and then proves the precursor of tremendous scent. The Kildare hounds were at a very favourite rendezvous, Courtown Gate, and the weather *désagrémens;* notwithstanding, there was a full and fashionable meet at the entrance to Captain Davis's park. Meath mustered strong there; among the visitors thence being Mr. A. M'Neil, Lord Langford, Lord Rossmore, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Mr. Dunne, Captain Tuthill, Lord A. Lennox, the Messrs. Carew, Mr. Rynd, the Messrs. Purdon, Mr. M'Gerr. Dublin sent Lord Oranmore, Mr. Hone, Colonel Frank Forster, Captains Colthurst and M'Calmont; the Queen's County, Mr. and Mrs. Adair.

The Courtown foxes have become a by-word for stoutness and pace this season; one was killed after a fine run to Donadea Castle, Sir Gerald Aylmer's park, six or seven weeks ago; a second has beaten the hounds after a quick scurry several times. But after such a night, and looking to the hollowness of the plantations, few, I fancy, felt much faith in a Courtown find this morning. Preservation and feeding will, however, do wonders, and this day illustrates the theme. No sooner were the pack put into the belt of timber opposite the house of Courtown than they

found; the fox did not dwell a second, but raced away across the Kilcock road, making his point for Laragh. Two fences now intervene between the field and the area of the chase—one into the plantation; another out of it, a drop into the road I mentioned. Freeman, the huntsman, and some more, got falls at the latter impediment, I believe. For my own part, having missed my hunter, who was sheltering somewhere, I was fain to canter back to a road which I hoped would prove parallel to part of the pursuit.

> "Suave mari magno turbantibus æquore ventis
> E terrâ alterius magnum spectare laborem."
>
> "Sweet from the shore, when billows roar,
> To view at ease the straining oar."

I had no Larah Brook before me now, no other big obstacle. How courageous and critical one gets on such occasions! It was a hard-riding lot of men as a rule, reckless of water—their motto, "Be with them, I will." If a few thought of rheumatism, or that they were not on their water-jumpers, or that the brook was full of snow and sleet water, I respect their caution. I saw no immersions as on the last occasion; but the pack have checked suddenly. Three minutes! five! what can it be? and when they go on again, led by Crystal, there does not seem much dash about them. Here they come: Major Dent, on his grey, jumps first over a bank into the Maynooth road; then come Mr. Percy La Touche and Lord Langford, and some fifteen or twenty soon after. At the road hounds seemed utterly helpless. The facts we learned afterwards: five couples of hounds had slipped the body of the pack, had been met on this very road by a few pursuers who were "out of it," and taken on straight after the hunted fox into Cullen's Gorse, some three miles distant. This they did, I am told, with only a single check. Meanwhile, we held on through Taghadoe after them, and the divisions of our army were reunited at Cullen's Gorse. From this we expelled a

fox—let us suppose him our hunted one, for it will give more interest to the narrative. He set his mask first in the Straffan direction, but the breeze was against that move; so he doubled back, crossed the sort of fosse road by which we usually approach the gorse, and then streamed away at good pace over a wide tract of moory land which has been reclaimed from bogdom or lakedom by draining off the surface water through very deep cuttings. One of these cuttings now interposes itself—a canal in width, with high embankments of mud and marl. One or two men, among whom were, I think, Major the Hon. E. Lawless and Mr. W. Blacker, find a spot where they can jump it. Most of us forded it, our horses sliding down the embankments very craftily. A slight check as we rise into higher ground—only momentary, however—and on we go cheerily enough till in sight of a school or institution for orphans, founded by the Conolly family. Another check occurs; then come a road, a locked gate—which has to be forced—a high wall for the hounds to climb; and all this gives the fox a great lead. We are now in small fields; but the hounds work the fast-cooling trail admirably. It leads into Killadoon, Lord Leitrim's park. Our fox has beaten us. He was a very good one, and I trust he may return safely to Courtown. The day was one of grief and tumbling. Will Freeman led off with a brace; Lord Clonmell followed suit with the same number. Mr. Allen M'Donough had a handsome black hunter of much value killed. Mr. Blacker, I hear, staked one of his good greys.* Major Dent's, I hope, escaped unscathed;

"For o'er the dale,
Or o'er the vale,
Or on the mountain's side,
That gallant grey,
Can race and stay
The fleeting pack beside."

* Snow-Storm, one of the finest hunters, and of the stoutest in Ireland, died of the effects.

Castletown did not hold a fox this evening. Among the casualties of the season, Mr. Filgate lost two good hounds lately in a railway accident.

The hunting annals of the Kilkenny hounds may be thus epitomized. Friday last, meeting at Ballykeefe, they found in Killeen, and after much bullying forced their fox into the open, when he ran very fast past Pottle Rath to Ballintaggart Wood, where he got to ground. From Ballykeefe they had an evening run, first towards Knocroe, then a ring by Shipton. On Monday snow impeded proceedings at Cappana cross-roads, so they went to Kilfane (Sir R. Power's park), and killed a fox there after an hour's work. From Summerhill a fox broke handsomely over the Thomastown road by Ballylynch, skirting Mr. Bryan's gorse, and eventually getting back to Summerhill, where hounds were stopped.

On Wednesday they were at Coolagh cross-roads, and after some desultory hunting from Garryricken they went to Butler's Wood; and, finding there, ran a fox by Nine-mile House and Mr. Wall Morris's plantations towards Garryricken, and back again to Butler's Wood, where he just beat the hounds by getting to ground.

The Ward Union hounds are hunting again! On Saturday, at the ninth milestone from Dublin on the northern road, they met a manageable field, and had, I am told, very good sport, running their first deer, a red one, as far as Ardcath; while the second, a fallow, enlarged on Garristown Hill, took them back kennelwards to Old Town. On Monday Newbridge held out attractions for the amateurs of lep-racing, but more especially the soldiers, who not only support the meeting in the most substantial way by hospitality almost *sans bornes*, but by entering horses and riding freely for their "pals" and the public also. I did not visit "the Cornet's course," preferring to throw in my lot with the Ward Union hounds at Batterstown station, where the assembly was full and fashionable, supplemented by a good many visitors and Meath men, among whom were Captain and the Hon. Mrs.

Candy, Captain Trotter, Captain Lascelles, Lord Langford, Mr. A. Macneil, Captain Kearney, Lord A. Lennox, Mr. White, Mr. and Miss Coleridge, Messrs. Purdon, Kelly, M'Gerr, Bayley, Waldron, M'Cormick, Grey, Trotter, Rafferty, Gore, Allen.

The first deer uncarted was a red one; the scene a field near the Poor-house at Dunshaughlin. From this point, with a happy instinct, she turned away from the swamps and brooks near Lagore, and made a pretty straight line to Parsonstown Manor, through which she ran a course nearly parallel to the Meath railway. Emerging from these lands, we come to the boundary fence—a double not unlike the well-known Punchestown fence before it was cut down to more pleasant proportions. There is no baulking or craning; some forty or fifty take it in good hunting style, and then we come to a wide "fly" that leads into sound, hard grass land—rather a treat in these soppy times for our hunters. It looks like a beautiful gallop, when an ill-omened shaggy-haired cur turns our deer almost into the pack. A thick hedge, however, protects her; the hounds stick to the line most truly, and now we are recrossing the broad double I referred to, passing once more through Parsonstown Manor. And now comes the celebrated Bush Farm, with its Aylesbury-vale-like fields; only once in, we have to get out. The obstacle is a narrow ledge of bank, made of recently dried mud apparently, which gives horses' hoofs very little holding; beyond it a very wide ditch, full of water and slime. Some found better spots than others; the earlier adventurers fared, I think, best. I saw Messrs. Meldon and Allen, two very heavy men, on the right side, having had very little of a scramble. Lord Langford's horse did it very cleverly; so did several others; but a chestnut horse got thoroughly imbedded in the mud, and detained his rider for some minutes, partly under him. Pursuit had ceased at or near this point by the capture of our quarry, who ran badly after the little affair with the yellow cur dog. A second deer, a fallow buck, enlarged near the Ratoath road, gave us a charming gallop over

large flying fences for a few minutes, till the Dublin road tempted him to exchange hard going for soft. Of his capture, the how or the when, I cannot speak. A Devonshire lady and her brother had the cream of the run, which it is to be hoped they found not inferior to the cream of their own beautiful land, with its wild stag-hunting and wild scenery.

On Tuesday, the 6th inst., the Meath hounds met at Somerville, a place which, with the surrounding undulations of grass, I have in previous letters attempted to place before the readers of *The Field*. I have no doubt the fine sunshine of the morning gleamed on much the same reaches of woodland and water as when I visited it last; that there was an equally gallant and hard-riding field—beauty, rank, and chivalry all combined to do honour to the cause of hunting in general, and Meath fox-hunting in particular; that Louth sent, as usual, a hard-riding division to the border covert, and that the visitors who have made Navan and various other points in Meath their head-quarters were there to a man and a woman. But from observation I cannot speak, as, in the first place, actuated by the laudable wish to save a hunter four or five miles of a long road, I did not go to the trysting-place; and, if I must go into personalities, let me confess that I spent a few unpleasant moments in a deep dyke partially under my hunter yesterday, and that the process of extrication by most kind friends on the bank was worse than the most vigorous manipulation of the swarthy shampooer at the Hammams in Jermyn Street, and one most hostile to early rising, which a meet something under a score of miles distant involves.

A bad practice it is, that trying to nick in with hounds in the afternoon. For once that it succeeds, it fails ten times; and, if attempted, it should be done most cautiously, if you wish your relations with the master to remain cordial and friendly as ever. A covert should not be approached under any circumstances, and even a considerable margin of road should be sacrificed to any little ambition to secure a good start or a good view of the pro-

ceedings. I am happy to say I did not offend in this respect to-day, never having got within two miles of the hounds; neither did my fellow-sinners—for I was not alone in breaking the canons. Having waited on the road half a mile or so from a gorse which is generally visited in the afternoon of a Somerville meet, we set forth in an opposite direction, and saw a number of very cheerful-looking sportsmen returning homewards, all very well pleased with the sport which the day had brought forth—no dissentients, no grumblers. I believe the day's proceedings were somewhat on this wise: Somerville Woods drawn first; then the usual visit to the neighbouring Walshe's Gorse—the inevitable find of probably the selfsame little fox so well known for the last season or two—the gallop over the now familiar line to Athcairne Castle, thence on towards Ardcath Chapel (pronounced as some Cockneys would "hard cash"), when the celebrity among foxes worked the pack out of scent or got to ground. I hear the time was thirty-five minutes. Kilmoon Sticks, known also as Newtown Covert—Mr. Reynell's care—was then tried, and with the wonted success (it is very small to the eye). The hounds, starting on capital terms with their fox, drove him down towards Garristown Hill, when he skirted the bog at the foot, and worked back into Newtown, where I believe he got to ground—twenty-five minutes I hear they made it, very fast—and over a good sound line; though the ground in places *was* naturally very holding, and one or two falls of course resulted, as horses overdone can no more exert due leverage to land them well on to a high bank than a ball-and-chain prisoner could execute a hornpipe. Lord Rossmore got an ugly-looking one, I hear, and so did Mr. Maher, a visitor; both, however, escaped well. These runs, though not very long, were, I hear, very satisfying, and there were no demands for fresh draws and fresh foxes. The day was glorious up to three or four o'clock; those who had long rides home had the customary rain accompaniment to beguile the way.

The tidings from the United Hunt country (Cork) is of rain,

and floods, and land half submerged. On the 26th ult., I hear, they had *the* run of the season from Carrignavar (four miles) at top speed, quite unchecked till their quarry got to ground in a sewer. The next find was at Temple Michael, from which they had a splendid hunting run of some nine miles or thereabouts, with very few checks in its extent, Lord Fermoy, Captain and Mr. W. Hunt being as continuously near hounds, by all accounts, as most men.

I am in arrear in my notices of Louth and its pack; but the stormy season has not favoured that county of late. On the 30th, meeting at Hilltown, they found in the Nullah, and ran a fox through the demesne to ground in a hole at the top of the main earths. Finding again in "The Carnes," they forced their fox into Hilltown, round it, and then, facing the storm, he ran by Percival's (under Winter-grass), and on straight into the Park of Duleek, when a burrow saved him after a good thirty-five minutes. The day was very stormy, which may account for their not finding again. On the 2nd inst., finding at Churchtown, and getting off on good terms from the gorse, they pressed their fox by Prestonstown, over Newstone and Gallows Hill into Clonbranton—twenty-five minutes up to this, and good; then round the gorse and the bog till they lost him in a turf-bank. Another fox turned up at Rathory, skirted Knockabbey, and got safely into Louth Hall. Lisrenny furnished a third fox and lots of park-hunting.

On Saturday last the Queen's County hounds were at Cullohill. They drew Belmount and Whitewall blank, but found at Harristown, and the fox, breaking at the Kyle Hill side as if Rossmore were his aim, suddenly turned and ran straight up wind to Lisduff (Lord Castletown's residence); before reaching it—in fact, when within two hundred yards of the extensive woods—they rolled him over after an uninterrupted forty-three minutes, the last part being in view. Besides his regular field, Mr. Stubber had a good many Kilkenny men out.

On Monday the pack were in the large woodlands of Bally-

kilcavan, Sir Allan Walshe's park; they killed one fox, ran another to ground, and had a good deal of hunting with a third, but scent was far from serving.

On Wednesday we had an almost total cessation of rain and storm; the air was balmy, the clouds were high, and some blue appeared at last in the vault of heaven. A large number took advantage of the bright lull in the elemental war to meet the Ward Union stag-hounds at Rathregan, a mile or two distant from Dunboyne on the Trim road. Meath and Kildare were both well represented. Among the visitors were Lords Langford, Rossmore, Lieut.-Colonel Forster, Mr. A. Macneil, Mr. Trotter, Mr. Howe, Mr. M'Gerr, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Mr. and Miss Hussey, with a strong detachment of officers belonging to the Rifle Brigade, the Inniskillings, the 3rd Dragoon Guards, and Staff.

The enlargement took place at the opposite side of the road from the Bush Farm, when the deer ran a wide loop, crossed the Ratoath road by Wilkinstown, ran over part of the Fairy House course, then, turning in the direction of Lagore, struck out to the right hand between Ratoath and Lagore, jumped into a by-road, which he used for a short distance; then, sailing over those wide grass fields which bound the Reisk fox covert, was captured not far from Kilbrew stick covert at a place known as the Riggans. It was a beautiful line, the pace good, and the seven miles' gallop was done fast, as there was only one short check near Ratoath. There was a good deal of grief, but no serious mourning, save on the part of Mr. D'Arcy, who had the misfortune to injure a very good hunter seriously, if not fatally; a *rising* gentleman jockey, of recent Newbridge fame, who is quite the Hope-Johnston of the Garrison here, was also the *falling* one, for he was down three times, I think, if not four; a noble Guardsman, who goes very hard and straight, came down heavily early in the run. A second deer was ready to be uncarted; but there was a lack of second horses forthcoming, and the first had generally had enough.

I forget whether I have alluded to an extraordinary good run which Mr. Preston's harriers—the Bellinter—gave a field rather weeded out by a high wall last Monday. Without entering on townland names, we may state that it began at the Hill of Skryne, skirted Ross House, wound through Tara Hall, passed by Lismullen (Sir J. Dillon's park), and ended at Cabra—one hour and thirty-five minutes of continuous pace almost unchecked; and the "galloping squire," on Grand Star, was conspicuous in front.

I hear the Curraghmore hounds had a capital day last Friday from Mount Neil, when a stout fox took them along very fast by Ashgrove to Aglish, near which village he got to ground, after standing up for fifty minutes. Carrigatubrid furnished two foxes, who ran two good rings in turn, and one was killed.

Those who went to Moore Abbey last Tuesday for fox-hunting had a long journey for nothing. A run from Moore Abbey is a possibility, not a probability—nor are the neighbouring coverts situated in the happiest of hunting grounds.

Friday, the 9th instant, was ushered in by frost, to which succeeded a tolerably dense haze, almost amounting to fog, between eight and ten a.m. The roads were unusually dry, and, if one had not been tempted into a canter along some inviting-looking sidings, one might possibly have arrived at one's destination (a Meath meet) with unsullied tops; but this cantering ground soon dispelled all such fond illusions. Squelch, squelch! spatter, spatter! There is a pond of muddy water under the slight veneer of dry mud at top, and very soon the fair spheres of Peel, Thomas, or Seadon look like the most thickly populated stellar region in the celestial globe, say the Milky Way, *plus* a few comets and planets thrown in.

"———incedis per undas
Suppositas cespiti doloso."

My road led me from the Dunboyne neighbourhood through Dunshaughlin, past the historic hill of Tara, freighted with its thousand traditions—ecclesiastical, warlike, and political; by Lismullen,

Bellinter, and Ardsallagh, where the Boyne, though not confined to nature's embankment, had sullenly retired from the valley which he had occupied for a long time with his encroaching tide. Time fails me now to speak of Bective Abbey, which one passes very soon, beautiful in its ivied ruins, or, indeed, of any other points of interest. In a few miles more we are at Meadstown cross-roads, evidently an important meet in popular estimation, for the surrounding roads are choke-full of carriages, second horsemen, cantering hacks, and all the *posse* of an extremely fashionable meet. And the morning's assemblage, so far as externals and properties are concerned, would not discredit Kirby Gate or Trouble House—not even in the burden of leather valises with which a score or so of very smart pad-grooms are handicapped. There is no railway or station near by to overflow into Meadstown. The Garrison of Dublin were conspicuously absent. Of the Ward Union men *pur et simple* there were hardly half-a-dozen at the tryst, including the Messrs. Hone and Coppinger; so 'tis fair to suppose that the intrinsic attractions of the fixture brought these crowds here to-day. The strangers or visitors were not numerous; among them were Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Lord A. Lennox, the Hon. Harry Bourke, the Hon. Mr. Harbord. Captain Peter Lowe, Mr. Waldron, R.H.A., Mr. Dundas, Captain Macaulay, Major Irwin, Captain Kearney, represented the viceregal staff. Meadstown Gorse is very silent and secluded, and nearly always holds a fox or two; to-day it was empty. The next visit was to a somewhat similar covert a mile or two distant, Philpotstown. Mrs. Young, the proprietor or proprietress, lives at one side of the road, in a very pleasant-looking parklike villa (which General Wardlaw occupied as a hunting-box a season or two ago). Mr. and Mrs. Reynard are "at home" in a gorse a quarter of a mile or so off the road on the opposite side. What is more to our purpose, our fox now breaks instantaneously. A red avalanche passes across the road I referred to, and, jumping a sunk fence in the lawn of Philpotstown the reverse way (I did

not see a refusal or mistake at it), presses hard on the pack, who flash on to a road, and there ended the chase in pursuit of our first fox, which began most promisingly. We are now trotting to Churchtown, another never-failing covert, owned, as so many of the best in this part of Meath are, by Mr. Barnewell. Those who lingered by the roadside coffee-housing or gossiping—nay, those who were not very keen about the matter—lost their start, and in very few cases ever recovered the lost distance. A small bit of wood, well-lined I fancy, is all I could see of a fox covert here; but in a moment after the hounds were put in they were straining away with burning scent on the far side. It is a race now, and no slow one; while, to make the unities complete, we are now on the Boyerstown racecourse, where the Meath or Navan races are held with much *éclat* every spring—large wide fences to jump, the line all grass, but holding enough. Such is our path of pursuit; the fox has been running in one direction and for one point for the last three miles or so, but never very straight; and now he bends by the Stand House to the left hand, and jumps into the Navan road. A donkey cart and Mrs. Jehu scare him back, and now he takes us along to the verge of Navan, then crosses the railway track near a sort of Danish rath, where there was a check of five or six minutes; then his course and ours lies parallel to the bed of the river Blackwater till he meets with a plantation near Liscarton Castle, and here in a burrow he saved himself. The distance is estimated at about seven miles. Up to the first and only check, it was twenty-five minutes of good galloping for those who started well with the pack—of hopeless and tumultuous pursuit for those who failed to do so. It boots not now to tell of the leaders, the tumblers, the beaten, the baffled, the blown (a lady went very well); for we are now pushing on to Rathmore Gorse (Lord Darnley's)—which gave them a sharp gallop *only yesterday evening*—towards Allenstown. A bit of wild unenclosed gorse is tried *en route*, with the result of a quick ring which emptied some saddles. Now we are at Rathmore proper. A find! a false

start! a second start, and all is well if we can get over the first few large fences and hit the right spots in them! A road crossed, and then we wind over the green hill of Ward, dip down a little valley, and surmount another green undulation, Rathcarn Hill. Meadstown Covert is just in front of us, and the fox tries it, but is forced to turn from it; and now he is racing through Kilbride, *en route* apparently for Tullaghnogue or Clifton Lodge. Whether he was pulled down by the hounds or baffled them, I cannot say. To have seen something of four chases, and trot back some twenty miles with a heavy weight, is enough for what they call the degenerate hunter of modern times. These hounds had a good gallop on Monday from Headstown towards Aclare, and killed a brace from Drewstown yesterday.

On my return home I find a post card from the hon. secretary of the Kildare hunt, inviting me to a meeting to consider the conditions on which Mr. Forbes proposes to take the management of the county pack, and to settle the preliminaries of the annual Red Coat Race and Hunt Ball.

Alas! the burden of conversation to-day was generally in a sad key—Mr. Archdale gone from us just a week; Captain Gubbins, one of the best sportsmen of the day (who, *consenu parum*, did more than receive a Victoria Cross in the harvest of fame his gallantry won him before Sevastopol), lies grievously hurt, and almost despaired of, by a fall from his horse; and now Mr. A. Macneil, so prominent a figure in the pursuits of Meath, Kildare, and the Ward Union packs, has just met with a serious accident from a fall also.

H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught is hunting the fox with the Duhallow hounds. His *début* was unfortunate, I hear, as he got kicked by a lady's horse on his way to his first meet, but was not much hurt, I am glad to say, and all will be rejoiced to hear.

On Saturday, owing very much to the Castle festivities, the Kildare hounds had an enormous meet at Straffan Bridge, while the congregation at Kilrue to meet the Ward Union stag-hounds is

described as almost equally plethoric. The Kildare hounds did not find till past two o'clock, and had then a long, slow, hunting run of an hour's duration from Bellavilla Gorse to Downing's Covert, and some more pottering beyond it. The line lay over a series of small inclosures, so there was a great deal of jumping and tumbling, and all the fun of the fair.

The Ward Union hounds ran a very wide semicircle, beginning at or near Kilrue, and ending at Maynooth; and, as the diameter cannot be less than seven miles, the length of the irregular circumference may be estimated at a very considerable mileage. Indeed, in some instances, horses did not reach their stables till the large, if not the largest hours.

As a specimen of the caprice and uncertainty of scent, I may mention that on Thursday the Meath hounds found it at its highest, specially round Drewstown. On Friday I thought it very good in Meath also, though the fact of the hounds starting close to these foxes on each occasion may have had much to say to its power. In Western Meath, on the same day, though, foxes abounded. At Knockdrin, Kilmaglish Gorse, the Crooked Wood, and Knock Ion, the driving power was totally wanting, so no sport ensued; while Mr. George Brooke's harriers had perhaps their best day this season. On this same Friday the scene of their pursuits—for they killed a brace of hares—was Cooltrim, Newtown, Hortlands, and Cappagh, to some of which places I have introduced your readers many times and oft, in writing of the Kildare fox-hounds and their pursuits.

To the sport in the Duhallow country last week—when the Convamore party included H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, Captains Fitzgerald and Colthurst, Lord Suffield, Mr. and Mrs. Adair, and the Earl of Clonmell—I can only make a passing allusion now. On Wednesday thirty-seven minutes without a check, and crowned by a kill; on Thursday a pleasant fifteen minutes to ground; on Saturday loyal crowds at Mallow, plenty of foxes, and sport moderate.

XIX.

"The best of all ways
To lengthen our days,
Is to steal a few hours from the night, my love!"

Dancing and Dublin—Bellavilla run—Venison and venerie—Duhallow sport.

"Nunc pede libero
Pulsanda tellus."

Like Belgium's capital, Dublin gathered together on Friday night her beauty and her chivalry, the Amphitryons being the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, the scene of the Terpsichorean festival the Castle in Dublin. Needless to say that, under such auspices, youth and pleasure meeting to chase with flying feet the happy hours, Liddell's band discoursing "strains that could create a soul under the ribs of death" (to use Milton's hyperbolical diction, never less strained perhaps than here), young men and maidens, dowagers and duennas, had what our cousins *d'outre mer* call "a good old time of it." A generation or two ago, no doubt, they understood balls and suppers, and love-making and love-marring, just as well as we do or think we do now. But the next day, or rather the next morning, hung heavier, I fancy, than it does now when there seems a universal consensus that the rightest and properest and most enjoyablest thing to do is to go forth and do homage at the nearest shrine of Diana, no longer of the Ephesians, but the Diana Celtica whose *cultus* was never more popular than in this decade, whose high priests were never more

embarrassed with the surging crowds of fervid votaries and pilgrims whose zeal lacks no devotion. By this preamble I mean that, after the Castle ball of last night, there was a very general exodus of the dancers early on Saturday in quest of a gallop, anywhere, anywhere out of the smoke. To the earlier risers Straffan Bridge, the fixture of the Kildare hounds at eleven o'clock, presented irresistible attractions. The scenery and surroundings of the trysting-place are very attractive. Two parks, well timbered and rich in conifers and evergreens, the glory of our damp climate, extend their limits to the well-known bridge which spans one of the longest and straightest reaches of the sinuous Liffey, into which well-furnished trees dip their branches. Straffan House commands some charming little islets, where the green of the laurel and the crimson of the dog-tree contrast well. *Pulsanda tellus!* No longer with satin shoe or dainty brodequin, but vicariously with the iron-shod hoofs of our hunters. *Invitat genialis hiems.* The morning has been rough and rainy; but by eleven o'clock it has turned to a warm overcast day of lights and shadows—what Beckford calls a *jour de dames*, when the eye is brighter, the colour heightened by animation and excitement, and no curdling east wind, no boisterous blasts, no fierce lights, mar the flush of beauty, the symmetry of hair, hat, and habit, or make veils and yashmaks necessary. For later revellers there is a very convenient meet of the Ward Union hounds at 1.15 p.m., at one of their most popular fixtures, very accessible from the metropolis by road, namely, Kilrue. Our concern, however, is not with them, but with the Kildare hounds at Straffan. Somebody told me—a man with a look of experience and veracity on his countenance—that thirty-five horse-boxes, including some trucks improvised into boxes, were freighted with hunters at the King's Bridge terminus (I tell the tale as 'twas told me, but vouch not for the statistics), and that the soldier officers who came from Dublin to this parade of mimic warfare numbered fifty-five. Again let me state that I did not tell the tale of them—there may have been

more, there may have been less; but I am sure that the sons of Mars, as the penny papers call them, formed a very large corps, recruited from the Inniskillings, the Rifle Brigade, the Staff, the 7th Fusiliers, the 23rd, and I know not how many other sources, while the Curragh and Newbridge sent a contingent of the 7th Dragoons, led by Major Dent on his now famous grey mare, and Captain Hanning-Lee represented the Staff of the Curragh. The viceregal party comprised Lord and Lady Randolph Churchill, escorted by a very full staff, among whom were Lieut.-Colonel F. Forster, Lord Clanmorris, Captain J. M'Calmont, Captain Norris, Captain Kearney, Captain Pratt Saunders, Captain C. Beresford.

Having spoken of the sons of Mars, I suppose I may take up my mythological parable and say something of the daughters of Venus, who formed a perfect galaxy at the meet, and who, if the syntax code be generally correct that "the masculine is more worthy than the feminine," upset *pro hac vice* all the rules and canons of grammar, and made us perhaps very bad English scholars, but most attentive students of the line of Irish beauty. Time would fail me to do even partial justice to this subject. Let me leave much to the imagination of the reader, merely adding that among the ladies at the rendezvous were the Ladies Fitzgerald, Lady Randolph Churchill, Lady Annette La Touche, Lady Edith Monck, the Hon. Mrs. Barton, the Hon. Miss Lawless, Lady Alison, Mrs. Langrishe, Mrs. Davis, Miss Irwin, the Misses Beauman, Miss O'Kelly, Miss Aylmer, Miss Kirkpatrick, Miss Tuthill, Miss Blacker. Among the many visitors were Lord M. Fitzgerald, Lord Oranmore, Lord Rossmore, Mr. M. Frewen, Mr. Rose, Captain Saunders, Captain Fetherstone-H., Mr. Chapman, Mr. Skeffington-Smyth, the Hon. L. White, Captain Graves Sawle, Mr. Power, Mr. Allan M'Donough, Captain the Hon. T. Scott. We recognized most of the members of the Kildare hunt, with the exception perhaps of Lord Clonmell, and one or two men who are hunting with the Duhallow hounds from Convamore (Lord Listowel's park).

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Enough of the *mise en scène.* Let us try and set this vast agglomeration of mounted humanity in rapid motion if we can; but first we must needs find the great motor—Monsieur the Fox. Without his presence and aroma we are playing at Hamlet *sans* the prince: a motley company of Polonii, Rosencrantzes, Guildensterns, and Ophelias, with no cue. Now Straffan has been most liberal of foxes this year; so has Lodge Park, its *vis-à-vis.* To-day we explored miles of plantation and screens, including a visit to the New Gorse, Castle Dillon, without effect, finding no "sign" but a somewhat stale drag. All this is very serious to the master! The Kildare men feel the unuttered remarks of the stranger and sojourner within their hunting gates. Some, full of ride and thinking the glory of the day was fairly departed, in their *idlesse* took to larking over such fences as came in their way. Better, perhaps, if they had kept that jumping power in reserve! *Nous verrons.* Presently the word "Bellavilla" struck the electric chain by which we're darkly bound. Some read it "Ballycaghan," and read it with joy. The former was the truer version, and now the long *cortége,* reaching considerably over a mile, is set in motion for Bellavilla Gorse; and fortunately, as 'tis four or five miles distant, our track lies over some three miles of turf, no gates to open, no fences to jump, most of it good if heavy galloping ground. At last our journeyings are over; we are standing at ease by Bellavilla Gorse, which is partially cut down, but which still contains a vast deal of covert for foxes. For my own part, I do not love Bellavilla Gorse: I never saw a really good run from it. The country round it is not good or pleasant. The Liffey forms a barrier in one direction, a canal in another. My memory recalls sundry frigid hours when we vainly hoped a fox would break from its recesses, but hounds had to be called off at last. To-day none of these misadventures befell us: in five minutes there was a find; in ten there was racing and chasing over, not Cannobie, but Longtown Lea.

> "Bad luck to the country! the clock had struck two;
> We had found ne'er a fox in the gorses we drew;
> When each heart felt a thrill at the sound 'Gone away!'
> And o'er Longtown demesne we are all making play."

Past the back of Mr. Sweetman's house, through the shrubbery, on to the lawn before the house; but here some evil genius prompted a couple of dozen of us or so to essay a short cut to a point. It would be a great short cut, 'tis true; but between peaty drains, trees, and I know not how many more impediments, few got well over and into the open. Lord Rossmore cleverly got over a small bit of dammed-up water, and found a quick exit; most of us returned, with 10 to 1 against our catching the pack, unless luck befriended us. And luck did befriend us, though we had proved ourselves neither brave nor wise, only foolishly venturesome and curious. Galloping first over the lawn, crossing a road, and holding on up a lane, the pack turned to us; for the fox, pointing at first for Mount Armstrong, or peradventure the nigher Millicent, had turned leftwards, and now we are in fairly rapid pursuit, till we come to some ruins of what must once have been some gentleman's residence, judging by the timber; and here there is a momentary check. Men are riding hard, the country is holding, the fences are ragged, and some of them rather large; small wonder if the falling sickness soon becomes epidemic. The hounds have now worked steadily up a hill; they are running again merrily downwards towards a village, which we learn is called Prosperous (on the *lucus* principle, of course). Mr. Frewen here has a lead, and, coming to a gate, pops over it with an *insouciance* bred of recent Leicestershire experiences. A noble lord, who has been going hard, has it next, but comes down! The third cracks the top rail! Strangely enough, in a field or two we come to a quickset hedge, with a drop; at one end of it there is a *quasi* hog-backed stile, a curiosity in Ireland, which one man selects for himself, and does neatly enough. Now we cross the Prosperous road, and for a mile or so there is any amount of jumping for

those who like it, while the hounds are steadily picking out the cold trail through plough and grass and small inclosures. Another road crossed, and we are in Mr. Boyd's lands—strongly fenced and very grief-causing. Three ladies are riding very well here—riding well and very well carried—but Miss O'Kelly's brown hunter is equal to any country. Soon we are on the edge of a peat moss, sprinkled with gorse brakes. This is Downing's Covert. The fox has not tarried here, though he has run through it, and the hounds, quite by themselves, give hound-lovers a treat as they hunt over the bog, noses down, till they emerge on to the upland, and carry the line along for another half-mile; but our fox is possibly in the Hill of Allen by this time. Our start was good, but in the small inclosures he beat the hounds easily. An hour's hunting, jumping and tumbling to any amount—it has not been such a bad day after all. Mr. Franks got, I hear, rather a nasty fall; so did the Hon. Mr. Luke White, or rather his horse did. Lady Randolph Churchill's horse was loose once at least, I know. Her ladyship's early experiences of Kildare fences were rather trying, but she got over the country most successfully. Among the heavy weights Mr. Chapman's brown hunter and a four-year-old of Mr. Murphy's (of Hortlands) distinguished themselves by their jumping capacity. Lord Maurice Fitzgerald was also very well carried.

On Monday, the 12th, a special from the Broadstone terminus brought down a good number of men and horses to Drumree station for the Ward Union meet at Culmullen cross-roads. Let me state *en parenthèse* that Lord Rossmore and Captain and Mrs. Candy are now occupying Culmullen Lodge as a hunting-box (Culmullen Lodge, so well known when it was the habitat of poor "Rufus Montgomery"), so it is needless to say that hospitality, hunting hospitality especially, is the rule of the house. Besides the soldiers and the Ward Union men from Dublin, a good many faces one associates with the Meath fox-hounds were at the trysting-place to-day—among them Lord Langford, Lord A. Lennox, Mr.

Trotter, the Hon. Harry Bourke, Lord Rossmore, Mr. A. Nugent, Captain Peter Low, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Mr. M'Gerr, Mr. Rose, Messrs. Hone, Butler, and Waldron, etc. The deer, an untried novice, was uncarted—or, let me say, "enlarged," for it sounds prettier—in a large field near the house, when, instead of taking to the now familiar track by Cultromer, Piper's Hill, and Batterstown, she skirted Culmullen offices, and, heading apparently for Woodtown, turned slightly, and ran by Beltrasna Gorse—actually, I believe, going through a bit of it. Here I am told, for I was not in a position to see the proceedings myself, there was a slight dwell, and a few hounds went away with the line in front of the pack. One hard-riding man thought he had quite pack enough, and galloped on with this two couple. Certain other ambitious spirits set all sail to catch their leader. The great body of the field and the pack were, of course, condemned to a stern chase, and a far slower one than it would have been but for these *contretemps*. From Beltrasna the track lay over a splendid bit of country by Kilmore, to the verge of Larch Hill, and thence to Garradice, where the capture was effected. The deer succumbed, though apparently uninjured when taken, and so the pack were treated to the rare luxury of venison *au naturel*, to which I feel sure they added a sauce *très piquante*. A fine gallop of thirty minutes, it might have been something better but for the cause I have mentioned. A second deer was not enlarged, on account of the accident to No. 1.

In sending you last week a sketch of a very long run which this pack had by Ratoath, Culmullen, the Hatchet, and so on to Maynooth, I should have stated that the hounds were stopped from further pursuit at 5.30 p.m. at the latter place, though the deer by all accounts was full of running still, and had a great start of her enemies at that late hour. She was left out perforce, and some spirited hunting passages may be expected in the efforts to recover her.

The sequel, or rather the conclusion, of Friday's second run in

Meath, which I sent you, was somehow on this wise: After passing Rathcarne, where a very good welter-weight blocked one of two available spots in a rugged double, the fox ran to the verge of Meadstown, then, passing Kilbride, made Tullaghnogue Covert, whence he was hustled out in twelve or fifteen minutes, and then his course lay back to Meadstown; but hounds were stopped at this point. The run must have been nearly twelve miles over grass, and the first part was very fast; one horse, I know, died of exhaustion. The Hon. Mrs. Candy was well up at the finish. It was a splendid day's sport certainly.

The treeing fox is not common in Ireland, and in most polled oaks or ashes you would be as likely to meet a *Carolus Rex* as a fox, though old ivied ruins are affected by wise vulps occasionally. In some parts of Gloucestershire so common a fox-haunt is a polled ash or willow, when well furnished with ivy, that no huntsman passes such a tree by without some investigation or cracking of whip under it. At Ballymacoll, in the County Meath, there is a very matted bit of ivy in the lawn, where a fox haunted regularly up to last season, his lair being as well known by the neighbours as the railway station. Why he has forsaken his home is not known generally. Perhaps Mr. Vulp preferred a basement to the more elevated position; perhaps change of scene became desirable for many reasons.

"Heigho, the wind and the rain!" Blowing great guns at night, raining torrents by day—such was the outlook on Tuesday, the 13th, when we were meditating about setting off for the Meath meet at Dunshaughlin. Methinks a few will sing "Heigh nonino!" for it is coming down in small bucketfuls, and the western horizon is black with rain. No! we have not degenerated from our fellows of Tarporley, of whom the Laureate sings—

> "Holding together, sir,
> Scorning the weather, sir,
> Like the good leather, sir,
> Which we put on."

Dunshaughlin reached, we find between one and two hundred sportsmen, and a few sportswomen too, awaiting the advent of the pack, who now top the hill, and are presently huddled together by Mr. Kelly's small hostelry, while waterproofed forms emerge from stables and all sorts of sheltering nooks, and in a few minutes a large cavalcade is in motion down the well-known lane leading to the Poor-house Gorse. Here we are amid wide green fields, divided from each other by single banks protected by a *quasi* moat. The gorse occupies a field in front, and, by Jove, 'tis a find! There he goes—a small fox! Goodall has some five or six couples of hounds with him; the rest have found another, and are hustling him about. The first fence is such as I have described, and in a second five men are "moated;" a few get over, not a few decline. It is only a couple of hundred yards to go round, and the pack are checking already. On to Parsonstown Manor—no! 'tis back towards Lagore. You can get there by gaps and gate with hardly a jump; you can have a few chasms *en route* if you please. Some did please. We have a sprinkling of "customers" out whom big things don't daunt. Mr. Trotter cares little what country he meets; Mr. Frewen is out on a fine bold hunter, whom I noticed recently in Lord Oranmore's possession; Captain Norris hails from the Pytchley; Lord Randolph Churchill is here straight from the Heythrop, dear to undergraduates; Messrs. Coppinger, Murland, Meldon, Hone, Turbitt, and a few more confront weekly the biggest country in these islands; the Hon. Harry Bourke loves width when associated with pace; while large fencing, of any sort or kind, is simply second nature to Lord Langford, Lord A. Lennox, Lord Rossmore, and Messrs. Candy, Harbord, Butler, etc. In Lagore plantations there is some delay, followed by a second excursion to our starting-point; then we visited Lagore again, once more slide into a brook and creep up the far side, jump into the Ratoath road, and now it looks like a run at last. A drop over a brook into a road, which was not nice for heavily burdened horses; then

a check; then on it goes to another Dunshaughlin covert (a rood or two of plantation, with some shrubs and gorse); then exit—for I forget what time—to Lagore; then who-whoop! who-whoop! Not a very bold fox, and one much given to sentry-like rounds; but the country must have been almost as daunting to him as to our horses, and horses *did* fall like ninepins; for, though we were never off grass, the going was like a tenacious slough. Who looks at a watch in such weather? so I can't tell you the time. I should think they hunted him for more than an hour ere they killed.

Lagore is the hospitable mansion of Mr. Thunder, and thither his sons bid the field, a call which not a few soaked mortals obeyed with alacrity. We are now *en route* to the Reisk Gorse. The mendacious glass, which has been rising for some time, now finds fulfilment of its augury: the rain ceases. The find and departure here is an affair of less than two minutes. Scent seems burning as the pack race after their leaders over very large grass fields, well gated, where, with the pull of the hill in your favour, you may send your horse along at best pace for a mile or more. Kilbrew Sticks is left on the hand of that name. We have got over the brook by a bridge. The hounds seem to dwell a bit in the covert; one single hound racing, and Mr. Trotter trying in vain to turn him, is what we see when we emerge from a small plantation. The hound is right; the pack stream after him. For a mile or two we have a good gallop, with lots of flying fences, till we get into Green Park. There is no detention worthy of mention here, among the shrubs and plantations; a minute or two at most, then on we go to Corbalton Hall, about a mile distant—a very stiff mile too; and here I left the hounds very busy with what I should imagine was a tired and beaten fox, for the woodlands and plantations are extensive. Considering the weather, the sport was very good; hounds worked admirably. The strangers from different hunts laud Meath and its grasseries (pray pardon the coinage), but think mostly that its fences are over-big. Perhaps a few natives concur in this estimate!

The pack had, I hear, a very smart gallop yesterday afternoon over a stiff line, after a moderate morning, from Shancarn to the Mullagh, almost a repetition of the extraordinary run of their opening day.

The hunting chronicle of the Duhallow pack, during H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught's visit to Convamore, runs somewhat in this fashion: Monday's meet was transferred to Wednesday to suit the programme, and it turned out very wet. Killalty Gorse, and Killalty Rock, close by, were foxless for a wonder; but in, or rather near, Lisnagourneen a fox was viewed stealing away. He ran a nice line for a bit (very much the same as he had travelled ten days before), then turned towards Glanworth, and was rolled over; thirty-five minutes of very good uninterrupted hunting, which I hear the Convamore party saw rather better than the rest of the field. His Royal Highness's mishap on the way has been already mentioned. Lunch followed at Mr. Welstead's, Ballywalton.

On the next day, they began by finding a brace of foxes at Clonee, one of whom they sent to ground in the direction of Sallylease, without much sport. Kilborehirt, the next covert tried, was surrounded by the loyal sons of the soil, whose zeal rather interfered with the hunting. A good fifteen minutes to ground under a road was the result, when the fox of the place was permitted to break into the open. Ballybane supplied a third fox, but his career was not very brilliant or exciting.

On Saturday Mallow was the meeting-place, and a *levée en masse* greeted the Duke. The Poor-house Gorse furnished nothing better than a stale drag. While moving to the second draw, a fox jumped up out of a hedgerow, was run to ground, dug out, and killed. While the pack were breaking him up, a second was tallied away. The hounds were clapped on him instantly, but made next to nothing of him, nor of another vulp found in Rosheen, who ran towards Longueville, Mr. Longfield's residence.

The Ward Union hounds met at Flat House on Thursday, the

15th (Wednesday, their usual meeting day, having been changed, we will suppose, in deference to Mother Church), and a soldiers' drag, with carts and carriages of all sorts, made the uninteresting spot wear for the nonce a joyous and festive aspect, to which a very pleasant, cheerful day added no slight assistance. Trotting across the railway track, with Norman's Grove on the right hand, we came to the enlarging field, and then the steeplechase—for it was one—began at fine pace, with a plentiful allowance of large ditching, which included the Caulstown Brook and a very large half-dry ditch near Loughlinstown, over which a few horses made tremendous springs (in the native tongue, "threw heavy leps"), while some more discreet slided down into the bottom and got up the far side with a half-jump, half-scramble. Through Harbourstown the line leads towards Ratoath, across the high-road, and thence on to Ashbourne. The deer being viewed now, for a short distance the green fields (tenacious and holding they were, too) are exchanged for a sound road. Greenoge is sighted, a turn back towards Ashbourne, and a capture effected. Such is a mere sketch of a magnificent pursuit over a grass vale second to none within my experience, and till Ballyhack was reached there was neither pause nor dwell in the continuous pace. Lords Langford and Rossmore, I fancy, saw the hounds from a good position all through, and so did Mr. Trotter. I haven't heard what the Kildare hounds did on Monday last. On Tuesday—watery Tuesday—the glorious uncertainties (or certainties) of the Irish turf (*cum* banks) were being exemplified on Halverstown hillside. On Wednesday (day of ashes) they met at Saggart; were near a good run from Tallaght, but missed it; and found foxes galore in Johnstown Kennedy.

The Wexford hounds have had a very good season. Let me illustrate the assertion by the evidence of one or two days. On the 22nd ult. they met at the kennels, and found in the Ringwood, the fox sweeping past the kennels, over the hill by Moneyhore, Clohass, Scobie Church, and Daphneyhill, into the fair green of

Enniscorthy, where a horse mart was being held—a famous opportunity to prove, what every owner of a likely horse was prepared to swear by the shades of his ancestors, that said horse or colt was the best-lepped horse in Ireland. Many joined the ranks of pursuit here. The fox now bent to the left, and ran rather a back track, but failed to beat his enemies, who rolled him over after one hour and twenty minutes of capital hunting.

The 26th is said to have been the best scenting day of the season in Wexford. From Courtnacuddy Wood they ran a fox straight into Castleboro'. Their second they found in Killoughran Wood, and the pack, getting off on the best of terms with him, ran him a hard ring by the Chapel of Carne, thence across the large fields towards Ballyhyland, which he skirted, and then turned for Woodbrook; but he was beginning to feel the severity of the pace, so he turned again, spurted past Ballyhyland Lawn, hoping to gain the earths at Warren's Gorse, but they were closed. He had made his final effort, and the pack were on him. Fifty-three minutes, very good and continuous. This was followed on the 29th by a very fine hunting run from Mr. Maher's New Gorse, while on the 12th inst. they had thirty rare good minutes in the teeth of a strong wind, running from scent to view. On Tuesday the Curraghmore hounds, with whose master his Royal Highness is now staying, met at Guilco cross-roads, and seem to have had a very fine ring from Rathgormac, described as a dozen miles done in one hour and twenty-five minutes! We have had a Leicestershire man over here during the past ten days, and I much regret that the sport he has seen has not been first-class by any means—hardly second-rate—as he is quite as much at home in Ireland as in the shires of the Saxon, coming up very nearly to the Cheshire poet's ideal man, "to whom nought came amiss." In a run the other day he managed to sound the depths of a river, and in going to his station he was accosted by a native, who remarked, "Faith ye were in a river, and they're *very wet* this season!"

The Kilkenny hounds have had a busy week of it, beginning

at Desart on Monday, when they killed, after a pursuit of three hours. On Wednesday, the 7th, they were at Castle Morris, where a fine extensive park and handsome modern house give beauty to a whole hill slope. In Bullaglass, a covert of Lord Bessborough's, a very stout fox turned up, who, without any very straight impulse, kept the pack at work between Wynne's Gorse, Owning's, the Slate Quarries, and Castle Morris for upwards of two hours.

On Friday, meeting at Foyle Bridge, they first sent a fox from Ballyspellan to ground, then drew the Rock, and had a capital and very long half-ring from it, through Aharney, Ballyspellan, and Gathertown, etc., the pack running into their fox in the open before he was able to complete it. The time was one hour and thirty minutes; the line very good.

The Westmeath hounds had a good run from Gaulston Park on Tuesday, the track leading by the Grove towards Violetstown and Clonmoyle, through Catherinestown and Gurteen into Gaybrook, where fresh foxes turned up; but the hounds kept to their own, hunted him by Dunbodin and Carrick, till he got to ground in Skreen.

The Kildare hounds had a great deal of hunting and a long run, which improved towards its close, from Nine-tree Hill Gorse on Thursday, when they met at Athy.

Sir David Roche's pack had a fine pursuit from Ballycummin on Friday, the 9th, beating the field into Cahirconlish, about eight miles. Sir David, to the regret of the country, has sent in his resignation.

The Meath hounds were at Larracor on Friday, and, finding instantly at Moneymore Gorse, ran a fox over a charming line towards Tobercur, when he was headed and got to ground. Rahinstown found them a fox, but could not give scent to drive him withal; while in Garradice they found their third fox, and had a fine hunting run, with fast bits in it. They had a fast gallop from Headfort through Kilmainham to Blomesbury on Thursday, in which the hounds were quite alone.

It is satisfactory to be able to report many of the wounded in our mimic warfare as convalescent. Lord Howth is riding again; Mr. Morrogh is driving about; Mr. Macneil, who put out his hip joint about a week ago, is going on very well, though in bed still —his stud will be in the market very soon, well-bred powerful horses, accustomed to go straight and fast, one or two of them extra good performers over water, and I hear over timber too, but of the latter accomplishment I can only speak by hearsay, opportunities for gaining this distinction are so rare in Ireland. Another sportsman, very well known in Meath and Kildare, has just passed away—Dr. Wade, the owner and breeder of many good horses in his time. Martha was, perhaps, the best known of his recent lot.

I think I mentioned the fact of the Duke of Connaught's being a visitor at Curraghmore, and hunting with that splendid pack of fox-hounds, one of whose highest praises is the competition in good kennels for their drafts. Let me here give an epitome of their sport last week. 13th February, meeting at Guilco cross-roads, they got on to a fox, who did not await a ceremonious draw, but raced away for the mountain of Crughorne, where he got into the rocky fissures; twenty-two minutes at top speed, most men down. The Duke was well carried by a horse of Lord Waterford's—Anchor. A second fox was found at Ballyneal, who ran to the same mountain refuge, which cannot be thoroughly stopped; eighteen minutes, with burning scent. Anchor again bore his Royal Highness in the van. The third fox turned up in Rathgormac, pointing for Curraghmore; but, headed, he made for Carrick Wood, running a splendid line of grass; then swung to the left, and, crossing the Milvale river, brushed through the Churchtown plantations, trying hard to make Gurteen; but, finding his powers failing fast, he turned back for Coolnamuck, and got into Rathgormac again, when he crept into a rabbit hole a very short distance in front of the pack. Six only finished this splendid circuit of eleven miles, which was done very little over the hour—namely, Lord Waterford, Mr. Mansfield (who had a

front place all through, I hear), the huntsman and first whip, Mr. Mence, and a farmer. The Duke, mounted on what I call the Kearsley roan, saw the run well up to Churchtown. On the 15th they met at Dangan Bridge in storm and rain, which, however, did not prevent an enormous field from coming thither. A long trot partly across country brought them to Knockbrack, the Duke of Connaught getting a rather nasty fall at a wall, from his horse landing on a flag. A fox broke from here handsomely, but was headed back, when he tried the open the second time. Duke had eighteen couple of his bitches unpleasantly near his brush, and the result was an extremely fast scurry of twenty minutes to Ballyvaron, where he got to ground in a drain under the road. A fox was chopped at Tory Hill, and the storm after that dispersed every one homewards.

The 16th saw them at Mountain Grove, and presently trying Carrick Truss, whence a greyhound fox sallied forth at once, pointing for Killeen, and gaining a few precious seconds at the start; from Killeen he bent in the direction of Castle Morris (Kilkenny county), and it was a race to it for hounds and horses for about five miles. He ran right through the woods here to make Wynn's Gorse, but, strength failing, he swung down into the vale, and was rolled over in the open—in fact, in the middle of a large grass field—at Harristown, after an hour and twenty minutes over thirteen miles of continuous and light grass. Eighteen couple of hounds started in this splendid chase; seventeen and a half broke up their fox, one having been ridden over. The Duke of Connaught was again carried to the front by Anchor, and saw the finish well. Thirty-nine and a half brace of foxes have been killed by this triumphant pack, and not one dug out since the cub-hunting. Needless to say, H.R.H. was enthusiastically received by all classes. His popularity in Ireland *was* hereditary, it *is* now personal.

Sport in Louth, too, has been first-class. I can only glance at it now. These are the plums of the pie: An hour and seven

minutes from Charleville on Monday, the 5th. On the 10th, after much wood-hunting at Cabra, a capital fifty minutes from Lisnaboe. On the 13th, three-quarters of an hour very fast from Bragganstown Gorse to the town of Ardee. On the 16th, a very long circular hunting run from Glenmore, by Plattens, Donore, Duleek, Rathmullen, back to Glenmore, two hours and fifteen minutes in all. On the 8th the pack had the narrowest of escapes as they were pursuing along the Northern line.

The Ward Union hounds had a singularly fine run on Wednesday over a perfect grass line of upwards of thirteen miles. I can only allude to it *en passant* now.

XX.

"The earths are open: will he reach the cover?
Who-whoop! he sinks exhausted; all is over!"

Larracor—Fine evening run from Pratt's Gorse—"Laragh"—Kill near Killakee—A field squandered.

FRIDAY, the 16th of February, made its advent in white rime and some little congelation of the plasters of mud and clay which the recent open weather had spread about most liberally. By nine o'clock, or a little after, with the evil omen of a very vivid rainbow, down came the rain and sleet with a will, and so cold that snow seemed about to succeed very quickly. However, after one outburst of the sleet and rain, the sun shone forth, the clouds disappeared, the horizon extended, and for seven hours we had the treat and novelty of a gloriously fine day, with a bite and sting in the air all the time, which might, or might not, bode the most burning scent or its total absence, for in such temperature there is seldom any medium.

The meeting-point of the Meath hounds was Larracor, by the cross-roads, one of which leads to the small church and parsonage which the genius of Swift has immortalized, and the presence of Esther Johnson (Stella) has embalmed in the romantic passages of Irish story. Coming down Braemount Hill, the fine valley of the Boyne seemed spread out before one, and the turreted Trim, with its chain of castles and fortalices carrying one back to the Plantagenet times, did not seem more than a mile distant, though

really, I believe, a good deal further off. It was my case to have ridden a long distance to the meeting-point, and the severity of the earlier hours probably made me hurry over those long, weary Irish miles at better pace than usual, for I found myself the first in the field, with ample leisure to survey a large troop of as neat and well-appointed pad-grooms and second horsemen as any pack within my experience can show. Here are two fine capital weight-carriers sent on by Lieut.-Colonel Fraser for Lord Suffield. Lord Howth's second horseman is here—a good omen, as his lordship has been compelled to be an absentee for some weeks now, owing to strains from a severe fall. Two fine, powerful horses, belonging to Mr. Brown, of Elm Grove, catch the eye at once—a bay and a chestnut; Lords Rossmore, Langford, and Captain Candy's hunters will bear full inspection and criticism; so will the Hon. H. Bourke's, Major-General Herbert's, and Mr. Trotter's. But time is up; the master's cart and the well-known chestnut pull up; ten minutes is devoted to the day's programme, the exchange of news, and gossip. Then, late or early, punctual or tardy, no more time is given, and something like a hundred or a hundred and thirty mounted men, a few carriages, and half-a-dozen ladies are set in motion by the *mot d'ordre* of Mr. Waller—"Moneymore." I should think it was a short mile from the assembling-place, a natural gorse, apparently assisted much by care and inclosure. While the pack are busy questing about, let us glance at our *entourage*. The usual Meath men are here in fair force; some Ward Union pursuers have thrown in their lot with fox-hunting to-day; from Kildare come Mr. Forbes, the master-elect, Captain Davis, Mr. Maher, and one or two more; while a young lady, who went remarkably well last Meadstown day, Miss Colgan, appears to be piloted by the last-named gentleman, who seldom rides a bad hunter. Captain Kearney represents the Castle staff; Lord Suffield, expected, does not turn up, but the Hon. Mr. Harbord, his son, is to the fore.

The hounds have found. There seems a scent in covert; a

hat is raised. There he goes over a fine old grass pasture which rides as firm and strong and consistent as a pavement, which in these times of slough and slush is a rare delight and joy. A comparative stranger to this part of royal Meath, I cannot presume to say where our little red rover is bound; for all I know is that, after a field or two of nice galloping, we turned to the left and met a large double—really a model fence, and such as you would choose to break a colt over. But, whether the taking-off was soft, or men hit upon bad spots, there were flashes of legs and arms in the air, empty saddles, Lords and Commons on the bank or in the ditch! Another bank follows presently; it is not so formidable as the first, but it leads to certain curiosities in horse attitudes worth a study. People have now shaken into their places. There seems a green perspective in front, when the hounds throw up their heads! The fox has been apparently headed at a staked gap by a herdsman, and has gone to ground in a burrow in the middle of a large field. Tobercur is the place's name, I hear. Moneymore is so good a gorse that we go back there on the off chance of a second find, but in vain; and now we are passing the extensive park and square ruins of Dangan Castle, the ancient manorial seat of the Wellesleys, and, turning down a lane-way, find ourselves presently at the Bullring Covert, consisting of two or three little well-gorsed hillocks, with some rather swampy land under them. The hounds take possession of the hill; we maunder about through the swamps. There is no tauromachy, but the conjugation of the verb πίπτω is thoroughly illustrated in every mood and tense; for there are some two or three well-known fences—doubles, guarded by full ditches on either side—which *must* be got over if our motto be old Blucher's, "vorwärts!" Harden your heart, my noble sportsman; vacillate not, nor waver; you will certainly get over or in; why not tempt your fate early, ere the banks become more rotten and more greasy by the wear of many scores of hoofs? The fences are contemptible to look at; but anything is serious

when the take-off is more than doubtful. The most conspicuous victim within my purview was a very smart second horseman, who got two baths in about as many minutes; the first time you saw a cockade flash in the light, then a column of water, that Trafalgar Square might be proud of, rising from the base of displacement! The first lot of men over got on a knoll, and formed a critical galley of onlookers, till it really became an ordeal to face, specially with a baulking horse. We are now by Rahinstown (Rainstown by pronunciation) Gorse, a sure find, judging by past experiences. To-day 'tis sure and quick; and even on this light land scent seems to be blazing, as the pack, led by a very neat Belvoir-like hound, Playmate, dash down a large, newly laid-down bit of grass, and top a hill, disappearing over a big bank. It is catchy, however; for after another field they are at fault, and Goodall brings them back to the bottom of the hill, and hits off the clue very happily. It leads on first by the edge of a wood, then across it to the Summerhill road, then follows a slow drag into the Bullring Gorse, with a repetition of the identical fences, and much the same scenic tableaux. Here we lost our fox, and trotted on to Summerhill in quest of another; but the main woods were being thinned, I believe, so we only drew one covert without result, and here we are *en route* to Garradice or Pratt's Gorse, a very thick fox-haunt, and one which takes much drawing, small as it looks. The find is immediate; the exit is not quite so quick. Our field is now reduced to some forty or fifty, and at the telegraphic "Gone away!" every one sets off, best pace, towards Summerhill; but in a very few minutes a greasy double has compelled a considerable slacking of speed and steam. The fox has turned towards Larch Hill, run through a portion of it, and then walked back to the gorse he came from. The latter part and any further sequence I did not see, having found *the* practicable spot in a large quick fence blocked up by the hunter of a hard-riding Saxon—his third fall, I think, that day—and not caring to go a considerable round at this late hour.

But I *should* have gone round; purblind mortals that we are, how can we forecast the ways of foxes, and the eventualities of a run which may appear to open most unpromisingly in its earlier chapters? It would appear that our little division went too far to the right, and that the fence I have alluded to was simply a field beyond the legitimate course. Hence these tears! The fox only skirted Larch Hill, then ran by the edge of the canal for some distance, crossed it somewhere near Ferns Lock, and raced away at the far side over a perfect line of vale country, till he had well-nigh reached Ballycaghan Gorse (the Kildare fox covert). Headed here by a hedger, as I am told, he turned back, recrossed the canal, making his way over the grassy reaches of Dollanstown and Drumlargan, by Pratt's Gorse, till he got once more into Larch Hill; and when hounds were stopped, owing to the very late hour and fading daylight, he was holding on for the Mullagh Hill, *en route* probably to Culmullen. One hard-riding man, who persevered to the sweet end, assured me it was about the best thing he had seen this season. The field at the commencement of it was very much reduced from its morning volume; by the wind-up it was very small and select. Among the stayers were Lords Langford and Rossmore, Mr. Trotter, Mr. Forbes, Mr. Purdon, Mr. Dunne, and, I think, Captain Candy. I hear the timers made the run one hour and a half; slow on the whole, but with fast bits throughout.

On Saturday, the 17th, to pursue our chronicle, the Kildare hounds met at Donadea Court House. It is the portal to a very fine country, but not particularly convenient for railway travellers, as it is some five or six miles, if not more, from either Sallins or Kilcock stations, the best ways of getting thither from Dublin or Westmeath. A dripping night preluded a most lovely day—grey and overshadowed, and not too gaudy to hope for splendid results in the way of sport. What was the sequel of great expectations my tale will unfold presently. I said it was a lovely day, with a sense of spring and change and life in every pulse of the

mild air, in every note of the musicians of the grove, thicket, and hedgerow. The ladies evidently thought it so, for they mustered in very great numbers, and stayed out till the finish, enjoying the rare climatic luxuries with great apparent zest; they nearly formed a small field in themselves. Besides the regular Kildare people, the visiting list comprised Lords Langford and Rossmore, Captain Candy, Mr. Fowler of Rahinstown, Messrs. Hone, Purdon, Dunne, Chapman, and M'Gerr, from Meath; from Dublin came Lieut.-Colonel Forster, Captain Lascelles, Mr. Usher Roberts, Mr. Davis, the Hon. L. White, Mr. Cross, and Mr. Wade Prosser; from Newbridge appeared Major Dent and some officers of the 7th Dragoons, Captain Hanning-Lee, A.D.C., Mr. Knox, R.H.A., and one or two brother officers. No fox appeared in Donadea or Mount Armstrong, and stony roads had to be trotted over for not a few miles till Cappagh was reached. Scent, judging by the melodious symphonies of the pack, was very good, but it mattered little to the hard-riding division out. Who-whoop! who-whoop! and the tenant of Cappagh Gorse is becoming incorporate with the Kildare pack. Ballycaghan Gorse remains, in all its extent and certainty of holding. Alas! the long line drawn up at a respectful distance learns in twenty minutes or so from the bugle call that another fox has paid the penalty of lingering too long in his gorsy home. Courtown has been staunch in holding foxes this season, but Courtown has no vulp life within it to-day! I did not wait to see Painstown run through, as from its limits it must be a very uncertain haunt.

On Monday, the 19th, the Ward Union stag-hounds, reached by a special train from the Broadstone terminus, attracted a fair field to Batterstown station. As bad luck would have it, some repairs were going on here, which necessitated a move for the horse-boxes on to Drumree station, a couple of miles further down the line. To meet the situation, the deer of the day was enlarged about a mile from Culmullen House, which gave all time to

assemble. A beautiful grass country faced us, but the deer had been coursed; so her track was most devious till we crossed "the Hatchet" road by Ribstone, then it was straight through Ballymaglasson to Baytown Park, thence in view to Vesington, where the capture was made. The run was in a downpour of rain, to which succeeded a wind and rain storm, as predicted by the meteorologists in New York and telegraphed as coming.

I had not space to do justice, or even to epitomize, a few days of fine sport recently shown by the Louth hounds in my last letter. Let me now give a *précis* of their performances.

On the 5th they were at Barmeath, found at once, and sent a fox to an unknown sewer in the park. From Charleville a fox was taken very fast for fifty minutes by Dunbar and Dromina into Painstown, where he was dead beat; but Mr. Filgate was unwilling to kill in the covert, so he gave the fox a start, which he used to good purpose in getting to the open earths at Rathaskar. One hour and seven minutes in all.

On the 8th, after killing a fox at Harbourstown, they got well away with another by Snowtown, hunting him for forty-five minutes by Naul and Stedalt. From Gormanstown, where several foxes were on foot together, one took to the metals, with hounds in pursuit; a train was following in their wake. The situation was awful for a huntsman and master, but no bad result followed.

On the 10th they were at Collon, put a fox to ground, then had a lot of woodland work for an hour, and a ring in the open with another. From Lisnaboe they ran a fox very hard for fifty minutes, but had to whip off on Meath Hill at five o'clock p.m.

On the 13th, meeting at Mansfieldstown, they visited Braganstown, where a lively fox started off before the pack, running by the Glyde river to Mapastown, and then, turning to the left, into Guddestown Gorse, where he did not hang a moment, but, passing over Roodstown Hill, crossed the river Dee, held on through Stakillen, and just beat the pack to ground in the old mount behind the town: forty-five minutes, extremely good.

A brace turned up in Drumcashel, and the day wound up with a racing fifteen minutes and a kill from Lisrenny, scent serving very well.

On the 16th they were at Glenmore, where they found a good starter, who ran a circuit by Plattens to Kearn's Glen and back. His next excursion was the White Mountain by Duleek, over the rails by Caulstown and Peamore to the station at Drogheda; next followed a long check at Ball's Grove, and then the chase led by Rathmullen into Old Bridge, back to Glenmore, where a friendly hand probably let him in. Two hours and fifteen minutes.

On Tuesday, the 20th, the Kildare hounds—who began the week rather infelicitously at Eagle Hill yesterday, finding a fair sprinkling of foxes all round Martinstown, but no driving power to make them dash into the open for dear life's sake—met at Naas, the ancient capital (so says venerable tradition) of the kings of Leinster. To-day it was turned into a *quasi-alfresco* durbar, to meet the hounds 'tis true, but also to meet H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, who was coming, so said fame, from Moore Abbey, Lord Drogheda's residence, for this rendezvous. Naas and its neighbouring meets have proved, so far as my experience this season goes, very faithful conductors of rain, hail, sleet, snow, storm, and tempest, and all things most inimical to hunting and hunting men and horses. I can hardly recall an exception or extenuating circumstance to this grave atmospheric indictment; and, to engrave the facts more permanently in my memory, it was my lot on every occasion to have to ride or drive the best part of a score of miles to the trysting-place.

The night of the 19th was fearfully stormy and wet, and I fear will be sadly calendered in many memories of sea-faring folk on our coasts. Even on land, there was a certain amount of flotsam and jetsam strewed about roads and fields, in the shape of trees blown down and branches snapped off by the violence of the gale. At eight o'clock on the morning of the 20th everything was very still and serene, though bitterly cold, and there was every

prospect of a dry, bracing day. In an hour or two everything changed. A biting wind from the north-west drove discharges of rain first, then sleet, then a combination of sleet, snow, and hail on the wayfarer, who was fortunate indeed if he were not his own coachman. The meet of the county pack was advertised for 11.30 to enable railway people from Dublin, Carlow, and the Queen's County to arrive in time; the state of the weather and these intermittent tempests made it well-nigh noon ere the cavalcade formed opposite the Royal Hotel into a sort of procession *en route* to Osberstown Gorse, about a mile to the westward. It was no small one, maugre the inclemency of the skies and the piercing, marrow-chilling cold. Ladies! They braved it in right womanly fashion in pony-carriages and on horseback, and I can aver that some provincial packs would think they had a fine field out in the amazoned squadron alone. Among them were Mrs. Tynte and Miss Tynte, Mrs. Moore and Miss Moore, the Countess of Huntingdon, the Hon. Miss Lawless, the Misses Beauman, Mrs. Langrishe, Mrs. Falkiner, Miss De Robeck, Miss Pratt, Miss Kilbee, Mrs. Bagot, Miss O'Kelly, the Misses Owen, Mrs. Lukin; while driving were Lady Annette La Touche, Mrs. Wakefield, Lady Maria Fitzclarence, Miss Burton and party, Lady Margaret Bourke, and Mrs. Ward Bennett. Among the many visitors were H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, the Earl of Huntingdon, the Hon. B. Fitzpatrick, Major Billington, Captains Bloomfield, Mills, Ward Bennett, Ellis, and one or two more Inniskillings; Mr. Wardrop and officers of the 3rd Dragoon Guards; Major Dent, Captains Day, George, Brooke, and others of the 7th Dragoons; Mr. Knox, Mr. Hibberd, and other Horse Artillerymen; Captains Hanning-Lee, Graves Sawle, and J. M'Calmont, A.D.C., Captain the Hon. T. Scott and officers of the Rifle Brigade, and Captain G. Fitzclarence, R.N. From the Queen's County came Mr. J. G. Adair, Mr. Skeffington Smyth, and Mr. Webber; from Dublin, Mr. Power and Mr. Rose; and from Cavan, Mr. Humphreys.

Osberstown Gorse looked as fine a fox-haunt as usual, but it did not hold a fox to-day for us, or if it did he would not break—a circumstance which I dare say relieved the minds of the owners of the widespread pastures around it, for they were in a state of semi-morass and partial slough already; so we moved on a couple of miles further, really almost backwards to Punchestown Gorse, which, like Othello, has done the state some service in this year of grace—I mean the hunting state; nor did it fail us at our need to-day. In a quarter of an hour we were following our pioneer over the field which leads to the grand stand, quite prepared, of course, to hunt any amount of foxes with the first four or five couple of hounds that emerged from the gorse. There is no hurry to-day. The hounds keep moving on, but that is all; and the fox has not had much of a start. In a couple of fields, near the Furry Hills, we are checking; then, in a small bit of plough, a rustic shows us the fox's path. On, nearly straight, up the several tiers of hills which the eastern range throws out as spurs. The field breaks up into three or four columns, and so, working on over small banks and an odd bit of timber, sometimes behind the toiling pack, sometimes before it, we arrive at Elverstown's fine gorse, and the well-known hills and ravines thereto pertaining. The delay here is very brief, and the hounds send their fox handsomely through it up the opposite hill, bound apparently for Glending or Rusboro', *viâ* Slieve Rhue. A snowstorm came on apace here, and shelter, if procurable, seemed more sensible than slow pottering. If the hounds had the gallop of the season after this, I can only speak and write of it from hearsay; but if others have eyes and eyelids fashioned like mine, they could not *see* fifty yards in front of them, much less *ride straight* in one of the blinding hailstorms which succeeded by-and-by. I believe there were falls over the small fences we crossed to-day. I only saw one which looked ugly at first—Rawle, the first whip, seeming to be under his horse, which fell at an up-bank; but, in reality, I fancy there was no danger. I hear this excellent hunt servant (many will endorse this record)

is leaving Kildare at the end of this season. He will be missed much, for his civil, obliging, and respectful manner have won him many friends. I do not pretend to be a competent judge, but I certainly thought him, so far as my observation went, a fine patient horseman, with dash when wanted, and well up to his work.

Wednesday, the 21st. The Ward Union hounds had a celebrity before them to-day in the red deer Laragh. The meet was at Rathbeggan, the enlargement at Porterstown, and a sheep-dog diverted Laragh from his original purpose, sending him over the terrible Bush Farm, which some wise men avoided, while others, hoping for open or unlocked gates, found that jump they must to get out, and the catalogue of catastrophes was, I hear, a long one. Thence the line leads on across the metals of the Meath Railway to Ballymaglasson, by Blackhall, and apparently for Kilcloon; but Laragh turned sharp to the right here, throwing out some of the field, and ran over a beautiful and rich pasture vale through Little Blackhall, by Colistown fox covert and the old castle of Mulhussey, to Mr. M'Gerr's farm; thence the track wavers towards Larch Hill, but hardly touches it, holding on for Kilmore and Summerhill, through the park, through the bit of peat moss, and on to Rahinstown, where Laragh was taken; the watches made it one hour and forty-five minutes.

The hounds ran unchecked, I think, the entire distance. The field got a momentary respite at the peat moss, between Summerhill and Agher, but the hounds were not stopped, running the entire circle.

I should not like to walk the distance for a bet much under fifteen miles! It would be very hard to discover a sign of plough, not only in the line, but for miles near it. Some fourteen finished where many began; nor do I profess to maintain that these fourteen were tied to the pack for all the chase. Lord Langford, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Thompson, and Mr. Trotter had a good view throughout, and so had an ecclesiastic.

Scent and sport, and stout foxes, combine to help the Wexford

hounds, of whose performance recently I gave your readers a slight sketch in my last letter, if my memory serves me truly. To continue their history: On the 29th they met at the Island, but did not find there, nor yet at Castle Talbot. The next draw was Mr. Maher's new covert, the Scough Bush, and a lucky one it proved, holding two, one of whom was brought a very wide ring, which occupied nearly an hour and a half. In his second departure he was joined by another fox, which did not improve matters; one was run to ground after two hours and fifteen minutes.

On the 5th inst. they met at Solsboro', and, without finishing the drawing of the covert there, adjourned to a sedgy bottom near Monague, where a fox (a celebrity, too) was said to resort—and truly, for the pack started on capital terms with the outlier, and took him straight away for Booly Hill, a seven-mile point. Here there was a long check; then the line, when hit off, led towards Ballycarnen, but a sheep-dog came on the scene here, and spoilt the almost inevitable finish to a fine run of one hour and ten minutes.

On the 7th the meet was Ballysop, and the pack were continuously hunting for two hours and forty-five minutes, changing foxes three times, once, at a critical time, at Stokestown.

On the 12th they were at Wilton Castle, Colonel Alcock's beautifully wooded residence, and, to begin with, had one hour's covert work there. Their second fox turned up in Ballybrennan, and the hounds, getting off close to him, hustled him away in the teeth of the wind by Ballymacasey and Courtnacuddy Plantations, thence to Castleboro', Lord Carew's residence, on to "Kelly's Brow," where, running from scent to view, they rolled him over after a race of thirty minutes' duration.

The Kildare hounds were at Kingswood on Friday, the 21st inst. I do not think that there was anything very exceptional or worthy of special notice in the fact, or in the tumultuous gathering together of an enormous crowd of the most heterogeneous character at this most uninteresting rendezvous, for this is *de règle*

at Kingswood; but what was perhaps peculiar and exceptional was the loveliness and dryness of the day, which succeeded a night of rain and storm—a fact attested by the sea-gulls, who were contending with the crows for the early worm as one rode to the meet. Like the marines, these sagacious birds seem equally at home on land and sea; and, to look at a huge flock of them walking about picking up their breakfasts in a green field, you would never fancy them equally at home in "the cradle of the deep" (whatever that poetic phrase may mean) or in the trough of a yeasty sea. Yes; there was another feature in the programme, no doubt most welcome to the ball-goers, and that was that the meet was put off till 11.30 a.m. I should require more columnar space than you could allow me were I to attempt a *catalogue raisonnée* of a tithe of the people who filled the road for half a mile, perhaps more. Mr. O'Reilly's coach, fairly freighted, caught the eye; so did the business-like team of the Inniskillings, and Lord Clonmell's gay steppers. Colonel Sarsfield Green's and Captain and Mrs. Playfair's phaetons were much *en evidence* as they were drawn up by Mr. Walsh's house, to whose "interior" the fraternity of sport seemed a passport which required neither endorsement or *visé*. Let me mention a few of the strangers who honoured this tryst, commencing my list with H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, who was, I think, staying at Bishopscourt (Lord Clonmell's) with a large party, which included Lord and Lady Listowel, Captain and Lady Maria Fitzclarence, Colonel Fraser, V.C., Mr. Horace Rochfort, etc. Captain Fitzgerald, the Duke's equerry, has been kept from the hunting field for some weeks by an accident, and to-day was watching proceedings from the pleasant eminence of a Malaga pony, who was one of the neatest and smartest I ever saw. If Malaga can export ponies of that stamp as well as raisins, I should think the fact would soon help the Customs dues, as polo would be sure to become generally popular again if men knew where to get the right sort of conveyances at reasonable rates. Among the ladies riding and

driving were Lady Wallscourt, Lady Maria Fitzclarence, Lady Annette La Touche, Mrs. Forbes, the Misses Higginson, Mrs. Spencer Lindsay and Miss Lindsay, Miss O'C. Morris, Miss Champney, Mrs. Langrishe, Mrs. Bagot, Mrs. Franks and the Misses La Touche, Miss Walsh, Mrs. Moore, Miss Kirkpatrick, the Misses Beauman, Mrs. and Miss Tuthill, Mrs. Dent, the Misses Townsend—but I cannot go on swelling the list. Sufficient to say that Dublin was there on horseback, and that the Garrison contributed a great many of the Rifle Brigade, the Inniskillings, and the 3rd Dragoons. The Staff was represented by Lieut.-Colonel Johnson, Captain Graves Sawle, and I know not how many more, while Newbridge and the Curragh, if not in great numbers, were strong in Major Dent of the 7th Dragoons and Mr. Knox of the R.H.A. From Wales came Lieut.-Colonel Henry Lindsay to his old hunting grounds.

I will not recapitulate the inevitable and dreary features of the drawing of Belgard Gorse, unseen as it is within a high old deer-park wall—the wandering about in groups in a couple of ploughed fields outside. The plough was drier than usual, and the fox more accommodating than his wont, for he broke quickly enough, and ran across Dr. E. Kennedy's fine lawn. The one hole of exit in the wall was jammed, as usual; but the fox did *not* run his usual track—perhaps it had become monotonous. He turned round Belgard, and trotted over that beautiful bit of level vale which separates the gorse from the mountains. There was no scent to press him, so he made a leisurely ring by the Rev. Mr. Robinson's place—here I saw the hon. secretary of a fashionable hunt in what looked for the moment a position of peril—and got into a drain not far from his starting-point.

On the 22nd they met at Gormanstown Chapel, centre of a fine bit of surrounding country. From Hatfield Gorse they had a slow run by Tober to Grangebeg, where scent, which had been flickering, failed altogether. To this succeeded another slow potter from Cryhelp mountainwards. The evening gallop of thirty-

five minutes from Copelands was, I hear, of very different character—fast and sustained. The Duke of Connaught was among the field, which was a large one.

Sport continues very good in Westmeath. I think I sent your readers an outline of a fine day's sport on the 12th, when they met at Gaulston Park (Lord Kilmaine's), and hunted two foxes over fine lines—the first by Lemon Grove and Enniscoffey, by Violetstown and Clonmoyle, till he was killed after a brilliant thirty-two minutes, which beat the field, at Plattstown, near Mullingar. While he was being broken up a second fox went away from a hedgerow, taking them to Gaybrook, where he hung a bit, thence over Bush Hill, through Dunboden and Morrogh, till he ran them out of scent.

On the 14th they were at Mosstown, and unfortunately chopped a fox in the stick covert. From Lunestown they raced into a second as he was gaining Glencara Covert, and had a slow hunting ring from the last-named fox-haunt by Mount Dalton.

On the 16th they found foxes abounding at Cooksboro' and Knockdrin, but scent was too feeble to do much good with them.

On the 19th they met at Gartlandstown Bridge, and found a brace at Knock Ion, but could not do much in the way of hunting them. Hope's Gorse held two, one of which was sent along by Barbavilla to Clondaliver, where he got to ground. The last few minutes of this race were fast. The Crooked Wood supplied a fox, but he got to ground quickly.

On Wednesday, the 21st, they met at Rathconrath, and found nothing in Justown Gorse but a stale drag. Glencara held a good fox, and they raced him into Crieve without a check, leaving Lunestown on the left; here he hung for a short time, then broke for Jamestown, crossed the railway pointing for Ballyhast; but, turning leftwards, he was presently rolled over in the open by Jamestown Bridge, after one hour and five minutes. Some slow hunting from Lunestown towards Crissaun filled in the rest of the day.

The chief events of the past week—I mean in our little

microcosm of hunting—have been a capital day's sport on Thursday last with the Meath hounds, when they met at the master's park, Allenstown. I say a good *day's* sport; for there was a bill of fare for all, and suitable to all tastes. Any amount of hound work in the forenoon about Allenstown, in the shape of a protracted chase, which ended in marking their fox to ground on the banks of the railway between Ballybeg and Kells. Then there was galloping, jumping, and hunting to please all in a good bit of twisty run from Rathmore Gorse to Tullaghnogue, through it, on to near Meadstown, till the fox ran them out of scent near Kilbride. Philpotstown was now drawn by way of a wind-up, and a most thoroughly successful one it proved, its tenant giving what some consider *the* run of the season; but as *the* run of the season, unless it be so exceptionally brilliant as to overshadow all possible comparison, is a very debatable point, a Pandora's box among the hard-riding division, I will only say that men whom I consider very competent judges (for I did not see it, unfortunately), laud it as a very high-class performance. Tullyard was the first covert touched till they came to Trim station, and here there was a check for a bit, the fox having entered a sewer, from which he was presently ejected; and from this point he was hunted along the river Boyne up to the New Haggard Mills, where he turned for Trimleston Gorse, and was not disturbed in his sanctuary.

Mr. George Brook's harriers had a very pleasant day's sport in the fine country near the Mause border land, or rather on the confines of Meath and Kildare; but the run that I hear most talked of was thirty-two minutes with the Bellinter harriers when Mr. Preston brought them, in compliment to Lord Rossmore and his party, to the neighbourhood of Culmullen, and ran a straight-necked hare to Kilcarty Gorse. Of the Bellinter uniform I think I have written before. On this occasion Lord Rossmore and his sister, the Hon. Mrs. Candy, and I know not how many more, turned out in the green livery of his lordship's private pack. It was "the wearing of the green" on a grand scale!

Having, owing to an accident, to leave Kingswood and its neighbourhood after the first run yesterday, I only learnt the events of the evening to-day (Saturday). They were on this wise: The Belgard fox left his drain of his own accord, the hounds were clapped on to him, and a fair hunting run of many tumbling incidents, and thirty minutes, ending at the inevitable Greenhills, was the result of this meritorious proceeding on his part. Then followed a long jog-trot to Loughtown, Miss Gould's Gorse (some particulars about which I wrote a few weeks ago), the field being considerably reduced in numbers by this time. A secluded spot, a run from it, if it be tenanted as it has ever been in my experience, is almost inevitable. This evening's chase was an exceptionally good one; I can only glance at it just now. From Loughtown to Gastlebagot is about two and a half miles over green fields, thence to the Garter stables on the Naas road some two more. Thence over the old Tallaght racecourse, a beautiful track, to a point near Killakee—I believe the exact spot is Mount Pelion—and here they rolled him over, after a fast hour and ten minutes.

On Saturday half Ireland that affects hunting met the Meath hounds at "the Hatchet." Fortunately, the third covert drawn, Pratt's Gorse, was a success, and its fox led the huge field at a break-neck pace for some three miles over a very stiff grass line to Moynalvey cross-road, when he disappeared, and was wholly unaccounted for. Beltrasna Gorse, the fourth visited, was also tenanted by a good sort of fox, who broke with the very slightest pressing, and ran a beautiful line to the Summerhill road, thence to the verge of Larch Hill, to Mulhussey Gorse, through it, and into Colistown Covert, where a considerate earth-stopper or covert-keeper let him into the newly made earths.

H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught was out to-day, and going well; so were several of the strangers present; and if, after to-day's experience, they sigh for greater pace or wider fencing, I fear they will share the fate of the *très difficiles*, who are rarely pleased and never contented.

I crave space! I believe I have occupied much! Like Oliver, I ask for more. The theme justifies it—the stoutest and straightest fox that has stood up this season for twelve statute miles before a gallant pack ere he met his doom! I will condense as much as I can, merely remarking that a very high tribute was paid to Irish hunting and Irish country last Friday by an old Staff-man—a good rider and a feather weight, who sees some of the best things in England, and speaks with some *connaissance de cause*. He saw the first run from Belgard well, the early part of which was execrably slow, owing to a difficulty in getting the hounds over the park wall; the second part was over a good line at steady pace, but not what would be called a very good line. Yet so enraptured was my friend by the country and the pack, that he wrote to me to say it was about the best thing he had seen this year. Now, when the Belgard fox was disposed of subterraneously, many went home, Dublin being temptingly near; others never saw it, having gone on to the vicinity of the second expected draw (bad form always), and, after waiting there some time, got tired of the process, and made a short day of it. So it was well-nigh four o'clock when Mr. E. Mansfield put the hounds into Pea Mount, when two foxes were on foot. Five couples broke with one; the rest followed presently over the road, which the hero of my tale (the tale of a brush) crossed resolutely undaunted by the Lords and Commons, the fair women and brave men who lined it. His point was Killakee; from this he never swerved, kept the middle of the large grass pastures he crossed *en route*, and never ran fence or hedgerow even when sinking! Through Castlebagot he sweeps, never diverging to the inviting gorse two fields to his right; hounds carry a great head, and there was never a check or pause till the Garter stables are reached. Here the fox had been slightly turned by two rustics, but the pack swung on to him directly, crossed the Dublin road, and never dwelt an instant till a ploughed field was reached; then there was a momentary delay, and most of the field retired

homewards. The line, however, was very quickly recovered; the fine grass lands of Kingswood are raced over, Belgard Gorse, close by, being wholly ignored by our fugitive; and now the Dodder is reached (and, to mark the locality, I may say the old Bawn Mills are on the right of our track). The far bank is guarded by a high wall with one single practicable spot, and that is wired. In vain does a gallant and hon. major, like another Samson Agonistes, shake the supports; they will not yield. And now comes up Will Freeman, with a horse lent him by Mr. W. Blacker, who unselfishly gave up pursuit (second horses had been missed); but his trusty wire-cutter is not in the saddle-tree. Mr. Percy La Touche, Mr. R. Walshe, jun., and a stranger, got over lower down, but are again wire-caged. Somehow or other, these wire coils are got over or round by something short of a dozen men, among whom were the master, Mr. Mansfield, Major the Hon. E. Lawless, Mr. Percy La Touche, Mr. R. Walshe, Mr. R. Kennedy, the huntsman, and a visitor or two. Light was waning fast, when shouts of exultation greeted the ears of this small band of strugglers. Two countrymen had seen this good fox rolled over in the open. For line, straightness, and decision I do not think this hunting episode can be surpassed in these three kingdoms this season. In the twelve miles I hear only a single heavy-riding field was crossed, and when the Dodder difficulty was reached the riders saw a single hound, thirty yards in front of the pack, racing like a greyhound. The hounds, I should add, were only "touched" once. For a comparison men go back to the great Laragh run of fourteen Irish miles, ending in a kill in the heart of Meath, which happened years ago, when Lord Mayo, then Lord Naas, was at the head of the pack.

Sport has been again propitious to Louth; a good twenty-two minutes on the 21st, from Skedog, by Shalip and Drakestown, to ground in Carracon; twelve minutes fast from Tenure to Collon, to ground; and forty-five minutes afterwards into Townley Hall, where the fugitive was bolted.

On the 23rd a racing seventeen minutes from Ballymead, by Tilltown, Smithstown, and Rockbellew, to Corfe Hill, where they rolled their fox over. Then a find in Greenhills, a ring, and a scurry by Irishtown to Gormanstown station, where the fox took to the line, and the pack were stopped with difficulty when the mid-day train from Dublin was just behind them. Curious, that much the same thing occurred on the 8th inst.! They had had forty minutes up to this of very good hunting.

From Cork come reports of fine sport. The best chase was from Castle Lyons, but "good things" emanated from Lisgrimlan, Newtown, and Dunkettle. The committee propose continuing the *status quo* next season, if no suitable master turns up in the mean time. But the bait of eleven or twelve hundred a year for three days a week, with hounds, kennels, lodging, etc., found, and a country kept, seems far too tempting to allow me to think that the United Hunt will remain masterless much longer. Mr. T. Montgomery and Mr. Morgan Smith, who met hunting accidents lately in these regions, are progressing most favourably.

I have omitted perforce several days' hunting in Meath, notably the 19th, when, after killing a brace of foxes at Bellinter and Dowdestown, they ran one to ground from Lismullen, and stopped the pack when hunting their fourth fox. Other hunting episodes I must postpone or pass over.

XXI.

"'Tis a fine hunting day, and as balmy as May,
And the hounds to the village have come."

"The Hatchet"—Beltrasna burst—Swainstown—Carlow and Kilkenny—Maynooth.

I HOPE I shall not raise a tempest of indignant contradictions when I say that *the* hunting grounds of Ireland *par excellence*—such as, I think, any stranger unaffected by local prejudices would choose—are the two great valleys of the Liffey and the Boyne, with their many tributaries, such as the Rye, the Nanny, the Hurley, the Blackwater, the Tolka, etc. No part of Ireland, I think, presents such wide horizons of level pasture lands, unbroken by mountain ridges or marred for hunting purposes by interjections of peat and bog. A cattle tract mainly, the holdings are far larger than in other parts of the island; and as are the holdings, so are the fields and the fences which bound them. Some three or four lines of railway only, at intervals of ten or a dozen miles apart, cut through these valleys. The land is far too valuable to be covered with much timber, so that, dotted as it is with good gorses every three or four miles, fast gallops seem to be a corollary from the situation itself. Of course this very wide area is not equal in all its parts for hunting purposes; round a few favoured spots parks and villas cluster, with their plantations and shrubberies.

A railway or canal spoils the perfect symmetry of another locality. The spot to which I propose to transport my readers

to-day has no such vices of situation. A solitary thatched public-house, of the genuine old Irish peasant architecture of the better type, much frequented by hauliers on their journey from Dumboyne to Summerhill, or from the latter place to Dublin, it stands quite alone on the roadside, commanding some cross-roads, surrounded on all sides by acres upon acres of the most luxuriant and level pastures. The shriek of the locomotive whistle is heard at a respectable distance of five or six miles; Maynooth, the nearest village, is five miles off. The parks of Carton and Summerhill flank it, but at a long distance; while the woods of Killeen and Dunsany Castles are fully six or seven miles to the north'ard, I should say. Such are the surroundings of "the Hatchet," where the Meath hounds met their *clientèle* and the general public on Saturday, February 24th. A dark, gloomy morning it was too! the rain coming down copiously, while the sombre, murky horizon seemed to portend a continuance of rainfall for the entire hunting day. I believe the assizes had something to do with the fixture, and its substitution for some other. Whatever cause, remote or proximate, led to its insertion on the Meath card, let us be thankful for the alteration. Let us hope for a repetition, if it leads to such pleasant results as were vouchsafed us to-day.

Yesterday's meet at Kingswood was, if we look at it in that point of view, a splendid homage of the *polloi*, leavened by a fair proportion of the *aristoi*, to the majesty of hunting—a willing offering of the crowd at the shrine of the great goddess Diana. To-day's meet was far smaller and more select; there was no railway invasion, no procession of coaches and carriages like a rehearsal of the Park, no ambiguous sportsmen and sportswomen; none of the pic-nicing out-for-the-day element. It was all hunting pure and simple, with the exception of two or three carriages which drove to the trysting-place, and disappeared soon afterwards. There was a small army of pad-grooms and second horsemen, with their charges, round "the Hatchet;" and in this

department of hunting I must say no county in Ireland within my ken at all approaches Meath as it is this season. The rain began to moderate about half-past eleven, the easy hour of assembly, and by the time we were fairly under way to the first draw—Colistown—the day had not only become fine, but had toned down into an atmosphere very warm, pleasant, and promising. Colistown is very young of growth, and to-day 'tis empty; so is the next gorse, Mulhussey, overlooked by the quaint ruins of a semi-ancient keep. The third, Garradice or Pratt's Gorse, brings us a fox, who, spite of the thick jungle in which he kennelled, broke away with very little pressing, and began a course towards Summerhill, introducing us to an initial double, overgrown with gorse and briars, where Lords and Commons and their mounts were struggling away presently in what Geoffry Gambado calls hippopiptic attitudes; but this reminds me that I have not said a word about the *personnel* of our fields. As we were going to Colistown we met the Bishopscourt break and its four horses, in which were H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught and Captain Fitzgerald, the Earl of Clonmell, Colonels Fraser and Forster, Lord Listowel, Mr. Percy La Touche, Mr. D. Mahoney. Kildare found representatives in Lord Cloncurry, Mr. C. Hamilton, Mr. E. Mansfield, Captain and Mrs. Davis, Mr. W. Forbes, and others. The Queen's County sent Mr. and Mrs. Adair; Westmeath its former M.F.H., Mr. Macdonald Moreton, and Captain Roden. The Culmullen party contributed Lords Rossmore and Francis Lennox, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, and Miss Lloyd. War's image would not be perfect without a major-general, and here is Major-General Herbert, with about, or even more than, half-a-dozen *aides-de-camp* of the Garrison and Castle, including Captains J. M'Calmont, Lord Clanmorris, Captains Beecher, Colthurst, Crosbie, Pratt, Saunders, and Kearney. The Inniskillings contributed Captain Ward Bennett and others; the 3rd Dragoons Messrs. Dundas, Wardrop, and Yatman; while from the metropolis came a number of Ward Union men, Messrs. Coppinger, Hone, Thompson, and

Jameson; and Cavan sent a master of stag-hounds in Mr. Humphreys. Needless to say, Meath was in the field in great numbers, including the strangers within its gates, who had become *glebæ addicti* from the love of hunting, such as Lord Howth, Mr. Dunville, Colonel Fraser, Captain Peter Lowe, etc. Without going further into names, I think I have said enough to satisfy the most sceptical that this was a very representative assemblage of hunting men—as good a gallery of experts as any M.F.H. could wish for. Forty or fifty men well over the frowning double I have alluded to, with huge green fields in front, the prospect before us is very pleasing. But what is this? The hounds recross this unpleasant barrier, and we *must* follow them, for there seems no pleasant path round it. The hounds *are* running, straining, sailing, whatever metaphor pleases you best; but certainly they are going very fast. A few small inclosures past—not the least of the Meath type—and we enter the lands of Clonlyon, Mr. Purdon's residence, and then come four or five large fences, productive of a certain amount of grief. We are now at Moynalvy cross-roads, of Ward Union celebrity. We have come very fast for a couple of miles, or perhaps more; but we have lost our fox, who either lay down or ran the road towards Summerhill. At any rate, casting forwards or casting backwards avails nothing; so we trot on to Beltrasna Gorse, where a few acres of strong covert, set in a grass prairie, afford promise of a good gallop, so only a good fox be on the premises. Away he goes, the red rover, pointing probably for Garradice, where we have just been, and away we go as fast as spurred horses can take us to the big dyke or brook which intervenes 'twixt us and the pack. It is wide enough, but has sloping banks, and that means much to a trained Irish hunter. I heard of a subsidence or two—one certainly—but I saw none. There is a momentary pause on the far side, but only of a few seconds, and then, led by a black-and-white bitch, the pack are presently stretched at their *very* best. Soon we come to a road with rather a drop into it, and the way out appears to be over a small wall;

so think the field who are up, and of course a few seconds of delay are scored to the bad. Mr. Trotter, on our left, has avoided this by picking his path over a quickset fence, and a lead of more than a field is the consequence. Then comes a second road, and in the adjoining field a very high up-fence ; and now hounds swing a bit to the left, giving the less advanced, who had not diverged to the right too far, a considerable pull. Now we are on the verge of Larch Hill lands ; but the hounds won't favour us on the right a bit—they are hugging the left all the way. It has been a race up to here, and not a slow one at all ; and now comes *the* ugly feature. In a beautiful valley between the undulations of the Mullagh and Larch Hill is a bit of rather swampy land, and through this flows or stagnates a drain of uncertain bottom and depth, with a high rotten-looking bank on the far side. It is only pleasantly jumped or scrambled over in one or two spots, I think ; if these are missed, a flounder or fall is almost inevitable, and men and horses did both. Less than a dozen, I believe, got over satisfactorily. Those who knew the topography generally avoided it, I fancy, as it was not hard to do before you had ridden to the swamp. The line is now on to Mulhussey Gorse, when a check occurs ; then on to the neighbouring covert of Colistown, which we had visited ineffectually that morning. Who-whoop ! who-whoop ! The main earths here have been considerately opened by some fox friend ; our run is over ; but for four miles it was as fast and sustained as could be desired, the last hounds never able to come up to the leaders. To see anything at all you must ride ; so I think nearly everybody rode—and, if they rode at all, rode hard, for the fences were large and the pace was very good. Two ladies went well part of the distance. A lady on a clever strawberry roan hunter was brilliantly carried for some time, and was quite in the front rank. H.R.H., undeterred by rather an unpleasant collision the day before, was going brilliantly, and what helped riders much was the fact of the inclination of the ground being in their favour.

On Monday morning, those who kept country hours—shall I say hunting hours?—saw a sheen of white crisp snow over the face of nature. It had rained and blustered through the night, and towards morning snow took the place of rain; but an unwontedly gorgeous sun was riding in the heavens, and long before noon the day became like that "lusty winter" which Adam, the pattern old-time servitor in "As You Like It," likened his age unto—"frosty but kindly." The Ward Union men, whose previous Saturday was not so brilliant in its events as recent runs almost warrant one in expecting, mustered in considerable force at Culmullen, and, enlarging near the house, had a very fine run at fair pace past Mulhussey Castle, and on to Newtown, near Kilcock, where they gained a view and pressed their deer so hard that he bounded on to the roof of a cottage, from which curious eminence he was dislodged by the exertions of a popular captain, lately in command of a troop of the 8th Hussars, giving a capital run afterwards by Moyglare and Maynooth—altogether voted by the company out a fine day's sport, and in a country where even moderate sport is more enjoyable than faster and more spirited gallops elsewhere.

On Tuesday the snow of the previous day was replaced by a hard white frost and rime everywhere. The wind was northerly, and "most forbiddingly keen;" but there was promise of a very fine day, and so it turned out. The Meath hounds were at Swainstown, a meet whose surroundings I have already attempted to describe for your readers; and, as they have not changed in the least, I will only add that the picture most appreciated apparently by crowds of cold and hungry hunters was not the panorama of wood, vale, and hill, which the sun was lighting up just now, but rather a warm interior, such as Dutch painters delighted in: the gleam of silver, contrasted with the ruby, golden, and brown tints of waning decanters, and the glow of a comforting fire. Mr. and Mrs. Preston, the hosts, bid the many visitors a hearty welcome, and the large party from Dublin and its Castle, including Lord

Randolph Churchill, Lieut.-Colonel Forster, Captains M'Calmont, Colthurst, Becher, Beresford, Kearney, Graves Sawle, etc., seemed to appreciate the welcome quarter of an hour after their frigid and slow journey by train thither. It was a large meet, and a very pretty meet, and a good many men from other hunts attended it. The show of purple and white leather was creditable. The display of fur and furbelows proves that what they call in the papers "the female vote" in Meath is given to fox-hunting. We cannot now dwell on these interesting themes; the hounds are drawing Swainstown Woods, but they draw them to-day in vain. We now come by a short cut—a long one to a gallant captain who parted with his mount at an up-bank which had to be jumped willy-nilly—to the fine wooded reaches of Killeen and Dunsany Castles, extending our researches even to the hill of Glaine, which seemed full of foxes last time we were here. To-day they have migrated lower down apparently, for out of one of the Dunsany plantations jumps a vulp, crosses the Meath line, and sets the large field in rapid motion to the nearest bridge, then up the grassy hill of Glaine, from which the eye catches sight of a fine hunting country, open and woodless. We are not to traverse it to-day, for our fox turned back to the woods very soon, and was lost or put to ground. Killeen Woods and Killeen Gorse do not hold to-day; so, passing through Smithstown, we come to a well-shrubbed clump of trees, known, I believe, in hunting diaries as the Gerrardstown Laurels, and these soon quivered with music. The hounds started, I think, very near their fox; they ran him merrily and musically over a few very wide grass fields in the wind's eye, but he got to ground in a rabbit burrow. Our next fox turned up in Gerrardstown Gorse. The short spin had put the horses' coats straight—I mean down, if nothing else. There was very little fencing; but at a blind place a raking bay mare, whose fine striding action I admired, gave a good sportsman a nasty fall, and very nearly a mouthful of teeth. From Gerrardstown followed a pottering ring, remarkable in nothing save in one rather newly constructed double towards

Reisk Gorse, which I would advise your readers, if ever in these parts, not to attempt unless they are on a hunter of some experience. Whether scent improved in the next exodus of this fox from Gerrardstown, I cannot say, as I had a lame horse, and a long walk before me. I should think not; for in those splendid grass fields, which we acupunctured plentifully with our hunters' hoofs —it is said to be a good cure for moss in land—scent ought to be present, if at all existent. I heard that they went on in the evening to Corbalton, found a fox there, and took him along very sharply into Gerrardstown. The distance is not very long.

Baytown was the meeting-place of the Ward Union hounds on Wednesday last, and the cross-roads next the house which bears the high-sounding title were full of black and red horsemen, moving about from a quarter past one o'clock. Among them were not a few of the Meath fox-hunters, including Mr. Trotter, Lord Rossmore, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Lord Langford, Miss Loyd, Mr. Murphy of the Grange, and the Messrs. Hone; while from Kildare came Lord Cloncurry, Captain and Mrs. Davis, Mr. Hanaway. The Garrison contributed a small detachment of the Rifle Brigade, Captain Bagot, the Hon. L. White, Mr. Cross, etc.; while the Guards, the Inniskillings, the 3rd, and the Staff were represented. Add a large assemblage of the regular Ward Union men, who seldom miss a day with this pack, and it will be seen that Mr. Turbitt, the acting master, had a very fair-sized army to command. The day was voted generally the most decidedly unambiguously fine day which the season has vouchsafed us so far. There had been a sharp frost of white complexion during the night, and, indeed, during the entire day it was freezing hard in the shade; but the air was light and buoyant, the sun was darting his rays all round, and the vault of heaven was high. A thoroughly enjoyable afternoon, and the surcharged fields were rejoicing in the dryness and absorption of the superfluous moisture which has pressed on them all the year. Trotting past Vesington—the general point of enlargement for a Baytown meet

—we come in a line with Crookstown, and here the hounds were put on, and commenced running fast towards Mr. Barry's farm, then across the Dunboyne road towards the parsonage of Rathregan, and on to Mr. Allen's grass expanses. Presently we view our red deer encircled by a pack of furious colleys, with a terrier among them. It seems she had been harried since the start by these brutes, and every field she crossed seemed likely to swell the number. Of course this spoilt the run, just as we were emerging into a lovely bit of country, and a capture was luckily soon made. Now, granting that one colley, say two colley dogs, are a necessity to every grass farm, surely the herds might be enjoined to keep them at home in kennel or by their sides during the hours when the stag-hounds are likely to be in the neighbourhood—in the neighbourhood, at any rate, of the enlargement. The owners of the farms are, I believe, most favourable and friendly to the Ward Union hounds. As for a good red deer, I know no public character so popular in this part of Ireland. The fox has no chance with him. Every one is on the *qui vive* about his movements—where he ran, where he was taken, etc. Every child along the roadside "interviews" you on the subject as you ride homewards; in fact, for an hour or two I think the stag of the day almost divides popular honours with Mr. Butt (I mean no pun). Why, then, cannot a very little care and forethought obviate these recurring cur crusades? The first deer secured, a second was enlarged on the far side of the Meath line, near Parsonstown Manor. I think the law given was short, for scent seemed very good indeed, and away we followed a racing pack in a line nearly parallel to the metals up to a point near Kelliston Bridge, when we turned to the right, ran through the lands of Johnstown, and presently found ourselves in the village of Dunshaughlin, where our quarry had jumped into a yard, and was unable to get out of the trap. After some few minutes' breathing time she was enlarged again, but a black greyhound coursed her, and turned her back into the village; so that this run too was marred, as it was beginning to

warm into something good. For two miles or thereabouts hounds ran very sharply over a beautiful line, which a Warwickshire man who was in the field appreciated very much.

Turning to the Kildare side of the country, the county pack were at Ballymore Eustace village on Monday, and devoted its earlier hours to hillside coverts. Hollywood was the first draw, and a good fox broke from it at once, and ran upwards, taking the field up a sharp hill—not pleasant riding—to some good, sound, healthy table land, and thence on to the Scalp Mountain, which is the refuge of all foxes for miles around, as the rocky fissures and holes among the boulders cannot be stopped.

From Blakestown, another hill covert, there was a find and departure; but the fox, after breaking, was headed back by a countryman into the jaws of the pack and killed prematurely. Elverstown held, and gave the pack plenty of covert-hunting for nearly half an hour.

A friendly controversy has recently been going on in one of the Dublin dailies respecting the scale of hunting expenses. Anthony Trollope put these down at £5 a day for men with one horse out, £10 for those with two. A writer in the journal I refer to, who speaks in a tone of experience and knowledge of his subject, puts them at not less than £6, probably more. That this should be the verdict of an Irishman seems strange, considering how much cheaper were all hunting arrangements formerly in this country than in the sister isle. Now I think the balance of economy is in favour of England, while the balance of sport is in favour of Ireland. As a specimen, I may quote one item common to all countries—horse shoes, for which my smith, a country smith too, charges me 5*s.* 6*d.* a set. I should not pay so much in the country in England. With regard to exact estimates of hunting expenses, it is very hard to frame them precisely, unless men sell off their studs annually, and then the average ought to be made over a period of, say five years; for luck is a very potent element in the matter, and in an open season like the present,

wear and tear of horseflesh will be a very serious item. What adds to the uncertainty of all figures in these estimates is the fact that men have such different ways of hunting. The same horse will come out twice a week with one man, while in another's hands the stud groom may find once in ten days more than an average per season. One man will give £70 or £80 a year to a valet to do work which another will get done equally well for perhaps £10. Some optimists in horseflesh will find a margin for their *menus plaisirs* after paying corn bills, etc.; while others, with less of commercial genius and a slight lack of inventive romance, will find a difficulty in selling their horses at all at hunter-like figures.

On Monday H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught left Bishopscourt for Bagnalstown, in the county Carlow, for the purpose of having a day with Mr. Watson's most perfect and perfectly hunted pack of fox-hounds. The meet was at the railway station of Bagnalstown, and the master, Sir C. Wolseley, Captain M'Clintock Bunbury, Mr. Stewart Duckett, and a few more members, were in waiting to welcome the Duke, while all classes cheered him enthusiastically as he arrived at the meeting-place. These loyal demonstrations, and the fact of flags having been placed on the very covert fence, were dead against the chances of sport; so when Kilenane was drawn, it happened that the tenant had set out for Shankhill half an hour previously, and, making use of his start, beat the hounds out of scent. Flagmount and Castlewarren proving blank, they went on to Claragh, from which they raced a fox into Flagmount, hustled him through it, and pulled him down in the open after a good thirty-five minutes, which the Duke—riding the winner of last year's Sportsman's Race here—saw very well all through. This closed the day's proceedings, as Mr. Watson had been drawing away from his own country.

The next day this pack were in a totally different part of their territory—the *Island* side as opposed to the *Carlow*. They met at Kildavin, and drew on towards Newtown Barry, but did not

find till they reached Coolgorragh, when a real good fox started off from Tombrick Wood; but turning to the right, ran right off to Mount Leinster, where he saved himself among the rocky crevasses. It was fifty-five minutes, with only one very brief pause, and those who rode the whole of this fine run might be, I believe, literally counted on one hand. They were the master, Mr. Beauchamp Bagenal, Mr. and Mrs. West, and Mr. Stewart Duckett; others saw parts of it only.

From Carlow, H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught moved—an easy stage it is—to Kilkenny Castle, where he was the guest of the Marquis and Marchioness of Ormonde. I regret much that an accident has prevented my seeing some very picturesque phases of fox-hunting, such as were presented here in the court-yard of Kilkenny Castle—a volume of Irish history bound in stone, where an historic past is linked to a prosperous present: a brilliant and representative assemblage—a famous pack, which has not suffered in Colonel Chaplin's hands, smart hunt servants, and—phenomenon of phenomena!—gorgeously fine weather to light up and glorify the panoply of purple and fine horses (fine linen, doubtless, too), which the occasion presented. Knockroe produced its fox, who ran a nice line to Tullaroane and back again, and once more to Tullaroane to ground. Killeen, too, was tenanted, and gave a sharp scurry. There were some casualties: Mr. Stannard, I hear, broke his arm; Mr. Shine his horse's neck.

On Thursday the Kildare hounds met at Bolton Hill, the extreme verge of their country and conterminous with Carlow, which usually helps to swell the assembly here. To-day the menace of frost and the splendid festivities of Kilkenny Castle made the ranks of pursuit extremely thin, Mr. B. Bagenal being nearly the single Carlow man present. Three foxes turned up in Hobartstown Gorse, one of which ran first towards Castle Dermot, then bent towards Sheriff's Hill, and led his field over a most intricate line to the hill of Mulla Crennan, through the plantations of Kilkea Castle, to be killed just outside, after fifty-

five minutes of good hunting, twenty-five at express pace. Sheriff's Hill furnished a second fox, who was lost at Corbally Hill; Spratstown a third, who after "backing and filling" between his own and Mat Conran's Gorse, ran fast to Ballintaggart Gorse, where night probably saved him. A very good day's sport for Fluellen's day, and I wish the 23rd Welsh Fusiliers (Colonel Mostyn's battalion) had seen it.

Saturday, the Kildare hounds met a very fashionable assemblage in Maynooth, to which historic and ecclesiastical and now academic town, I have before introduced my readers. A long special hunting train from Dublin, laden with horse-boxes, their owners and grooms, filled the main street of Maynooth with such an array of beauty, rank, and fashion, as the feudal old keep of the Geraldines has not overshadowed for many a day. Among the visitors were H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught and his equerry, Captain Maurice Fitzgerald, Lord and Lady Randolph Churchill and Lady Rosamond Churchill, Lady Wallscourt and Lady E. Stanhope, the Earl of Cork and Lady D. Boyle, Lord Clanmorris, Lieut.-Colonel Forster, Captain Beresford, Captain T. M'Calmont, Captain Kearney, Captain St. G. Colthurst, Captain Graves Sawle, Captain Crosbie, Captain Bagot, Captain Lascelles, Lord Rossmore, the Hon. L. White, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy and Miss Loyd, Colonel Fraser, V.C., Mr. Dunville, Mr. Rose, Captain and Lady Maria Fitzclarence, Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. C. W. Thesiger and Mrs. Thesiger, Captains O'Neal and Mills, Mr. Thompson and Mr. Ellis, of the Inniskillings; Major Dent, Captains Brooks, Day, and other officers of the 7th Dragoons; Captain Hibberd and officers of the R.H.A., Royal Engineers, and Rifle Brigade; Lieut.-Colonel Rich, R.E., Mr. Usher Roberts, and pursuers from Kildare, Meath, and I know not what other quarters, and it will be gathered that the meet was simply immense and overflowing. Sport was not in proportion—a mere ha'p'orth of bread in an intolerable quantity of sack. Taghadoe was drawn blank; Cullen's Gorse was tenantless. Carton gave us a brace,

one of whom was sent along through the park, over the wall, and then for about a mile and a half over a charming bit of vale watered by the Offalis, where the ladies—specially Lady D. Boyle, Lady Rosamond Churchill, and Lady Randolph Churchill—sent their hunters along over some very inviting singles with good will and the happiest results, till our fox re-entered the Duke of Leinster's and his own park, to be again hunted through its long length, hustled over the boundary wall, and killed in a somewhat sensational fashion by some old ruins. A magnificent fox; Lady Rosamond Churchill possesses his brush. The Hon. Mrs. Barton's beautiful grey hunter gave her a very shaking fall, and a Pytchley man was turned over by wire "couchant," but not hurt. Castletown gave us no sport. Fearing to occupy too much space, I have only given an outline of the day.

The Louth hounds were at Pepperstown Cross on Monday, and drew the coverts of Ardee House, Clonbracton, Churchtown, and Rathony, with the result of a find in each, a slow run, two foxes sent to ground, and several horses cut from the stones so prevalent in the banks here. The master had five thus wounded, though none were very seriously injured.

On Friday, the 2nd, they were at the Naul, and a run which looked very promising from that cover ended abruptly in a sewer, overlooked till to-day. From Mullahone they had the same mischance, but Knockbrack gave them a fox, who went off by Walshestown, and then circled back, beating the pack by getting into a rabbit burrow: a very sharp gallop of twenty-three minutes over a beautiful country. The day in its afternoon hours was so persistently wet that no one asked for further draws.

On Monday, Bective, on the Boyne, the hunting residence of Lieut.-Colonel Fraser, V.C., was the scene of one of the prettiest lawn meets I have witnessed for some time, perfect in all details, and most fashionably attended—the Marquis of Waterford, Lord R. Churchill and the Ladies Randolph and Rosamond Churchill, Mr. and Mrs. Dunville, the Earl of Cork and Lady D. Boyle,

Lady Stourton and party, General Herbert and party, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, the Earl of Howth, Lords Rossmore, Langford, and Listowel, Captain and Mrs. Chaine, Major and and the Hon. Mrs. Donaldson, Lieut.-Colonel Forster, Lieut.-Colonel Johnson, and Captains Colthurst, Kearney, J. M'Calmont, Norris, and Beecher, A.D.C.'s, being among the visitors. The day was beautiful in its early hours, and the fox turned up opportunely in Churchtown, running to Philpotstown. Of the rest of the day I cannot speak now, having hurried off to see a meet of the Ward Union hounds at Culmullen cross-roads, which produced two runs: the first, very promising and over a beautiful line, was spoilt by the inevitable colley pack; the second was a very good one from Kilmore *viâ* Culmullen House.

The latest interesting items of hunting news in Ireland, which I can only allude to here, are—First, a capital hound run in the Queen's County on Monday last, when the pack met at Corbally, found there, and blinked the entire field and staff by slipping off on the far side of the thick hedgerow, running their fox to ground near Orchard, after a very fast seven miles over a good line; among the field out were Lord Egmont and Captain Hare, master of the Duhallow hounds. Secondly, a magnificent meet of the Ward Union hounds at Dunboyne, on Wednesday, the 7th, followed by a very fine ring over a charming country, which Lord Cork, the late Master of the Buck-hounds, saw right well.

XXII.

"The backward crowd are still the first to chide;
For all can censure when but few can ride."

Maynooth and its multitudes—Bective beatitudes—Mr. Murphy—Long run from Dunmurry—Dunboyne and the Ward Hounds.

"THE everlasting hills!"—say, rather, the everlasting rills! One day, or rather one morning, of snow, two of white and one of black frost, and there seemed a possibility of hunting being in the same parlous case in this Green Isle as our letters from the mid-land shires tell us of as depressing the spirits of pursuers in the land of the Saxon; but Friday solved the problem for us in a deluge of rain, and by Saturday the familiar features of water in furrows, and small lacustrine systems over the vale, greeted the eye of survey in its early sweep of the horizon. A gloomy, penumbral, overcast morning it was!—the west seemed rain-laden. Soppy leathers and soaked tops seemed our inevitable portion. The Kildare hounds were due at Maynooth at 11.30 a.m. on Saturday, the 3rd instant. It was known or surmised that H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught was coming out to join them. *Quelle pauvre chance* for the hundreds bound to attend this great hunting function!—the legions of ladies, the cohorts of captains, the phalanx of pursuers from every corner of Ireland. Here my alliterates break down; for, if my memory serves me aright, the gentlemen-at-arms who formed the famous phalanx were on foot,

and cavalry was our order in Maynooth. Now dress plays no small part in a great hunting function such as to-day promised to be, and the pride of purple and the flash of Propert's properties suffer considerable diminution when exposed for hours to a diluvial downpour. As for ladies, I suppose, if the weather be inordinately bad, the majority of them, at least those under chaperonage, will stay at home very wisely; but if the day be simply chequered and ominous, I suppose the *question matinale* will be, is it the thick habit or the thin, the tall hat or the round, the covert coat brought or the covert coat left at home? To-day it was evident at a glance that the important question had been put and answered in very different fashions. One or two well-known pursuers made the dirtiest weather of it, so far as the outer man was concerned; some compromised; not a few put their faith up to "set fair," and dressed accordingly—and they were right. By 11 a.m. every trace of gloom and inky skies had vanished! The air was soft and velvety, a sun worthy of July was darting out warm rays all round, the perfume of the gorse blossom was abroad, crows were busy house-building; spring had burst upon us suddenly, in a fashion more like a Canadian latitude than our own! Some twenty horse-boxes came down from Dublin alone: from Newbridge and the Curragh came a strong body of cavalry. Lord Howth had mounted Lord Cork on a very clever hunter, while Colonel Fraser had lent a very perfect chestnut, the winner of the Light-Weight Red-coat race in Meath last year, to his daughter, Lady D. Boyle. The Carton party was a large one. "The Castle" contributed well-nigh a score of lords, ladies, and ministering captains to the gay scene; and, to sum up, the parallelogram formed by the ruins of the Fitzgerald fortresses on one side, the college of St. Patrick on the other, and some modern houses for the third and fourth, was choke-full of the rank and fashion of Ireland—civil, military, and political.

Mr. Mansfield was not long in setting his cavalcade in motion; and, trotting for a mile or two, we turn into a lane-way, both deep

in clay and mire, which leads to Taghadoe Gorse. The field outside the gorse is of a consistency which Hendon might rival in squelchiness, but very few other places I wot of. Taghadoe is blank, as the trumpet proclaims, and we move on, in two or three columns, by different routes, to Cullen's Gorse, about a mile or more distant, with some interludes of jumping and tumbling—of which I saw an illustration presently in a very dirty coat and a hat wrinkled like a top-boot of fifty years ago. Cullen's Gorse is approached by a sort of fosse road full of holes and inequalities; and here I heard that the Hon. Mrs. Barton's grey hunter came down heavily, and dislocated her wrists or elbows: I did not see the accident myself. There is no fox on the premises, so fox-haunted in the early season. So we move back to Carton, the splendid park of the Dukes of Leinster, which yields a rich harvest of beauty of scenery and architecture to the eye as it wanders over the spacious reaches of wood and water, river, lake, still pool and foaming cascade, hill and dale, inclosed by a wall not much less than eight miles in circumference. Besides the woods, there is a small bit of gorse and fox covert on a sunny hill-slope over-hanging the river Rye, and here we found a brace of foxes at once—the dog, one of the finest specimens of sleek, well-fed, well-grown foxhood that could be seen. Away he goes most obligingly, *en evidence* over the turf, setting the multitude into a gallop. His mask is pointed for Moygaddy, and it is on the cards that he will not stop till he has reached the Meath coverts of Mulhussey or Colistown. The wall I have alluded to is very high, and, though pierced by many gates, *the gate* in our path was by some oversight locked, and the key is not forthcoming. "Love laughs at locks," says the song; so do fox-hunters too, and a key was soon found that gave an exit. Presently our fox, who has, owing to this delay, been left to his own devices, tries to steal back to the park, and is viewed in doing so from the road. The hounds are soon clapped on, and are carrying the line over some rich grass fields, through which flows the river or brook Offalis—

a small stream, but presenting few jumpable spots, dammed up in others, and altogether a watery barrier of some moment. How some fared I know not; I heard of seven bathers in one part alone. The lot I had cast in with, led by a local pilot, Mr. Chapman, found an easy ford, and got over nicely and drily; then, after a flying fence or two, crossed the Dunboyne road, and presently pulled up at the Leixlip gate of Carton, to find the fox had re-entered the park, run through his gorse, essayed another venture into the country; but the hot day and his high condition were against him, an old ruin looks most inviting, so he creeps in. Freeman and the first whip climb up and actually handle him, but he slips away, only to fall into the jaws of the pack. The brush is presented to Lady Rosamond Churchill. Who-whoop! who-whoop! There ought to be much joy among the hen-wives around! Our next visit was to Castletown, but it produced no sport. A beautiful day, spent among scenes of great beauty, in pleasant company: who shall say that this, too, is not one of the pleasant sides of hunting—cub-hunting, if you will—a white-waistcoat day, if not a red-letter one? Captain Saunders narrowly escaped an accident from concealed wire: as it was, it turned man and horse over, and left its mark on the saddle-tree; but he was in the act of jumping into a road, so had very little or no "way on," hence the immunity! Let me also state in all fairness that this side of Meath is hardly ever run over by fox-hounds, though of course it is liable to an inroad any day from the Meath coverts of Colistown and Mulhussey as well as from the Kildare side. Harriers, however, hunt all round here, and wire is nearly as dangerous with hare hounds as with their bigger brethren.

Monday morning glistened with rime in its matutinal hours, your scribe and chronicler being about early, pricking down to Bective on the Boyne, to assist, if we must use the idiom of the Gaul, at a lawn meet at Colonel Fraser's residence. I know few rides which are likely to impress a stranger with a more vivid sense of the scope and quality of the best Irish hunting grounds.

The native, from the habit of seeing the grassy panorama spread weekly, perhaps daily, before his eye, fails to realize its grandeur (in a hunting sense)! but let him come from, say, the shires, and take this very ride of perhaps fourteen or fifteen English miles, and then let me hear his verdict. I recollect travelling over a portion of this country with the master of a crack pack of fox-hounds on the Navan line, and his remark to me, after a spell of gazing out of the window at the surrounding grasseries, was, "Why, one would think a fox should never be lost here;" but foxes are lost here, as in other countries, and I do not pretend to arrogate for Meath superior scenting qualifications to other hunting territories. Those best informed give the preference to several other districts less pleasing to the eye. What I do say is that a finer hunting perspective is gained here than in any land I wot of short of the Western prairies. Passing by Baytown Park, Vesington, Rathbeggan, we come to *Bat*terstown—which really seems a misnomer, and that the true reading should be Butterstown for a land ready to overflow with milk and its compounds. Passing over one or two little elevations, called "hills" in this vale land, such as Piper's Hill and Cross Keys Hill, and leaving the Grange and Kilcarty to our left, neither of them wooded enough to detain a fox more than a few moments, we come to Kilmessan station. The train has just landed its freight, human and equine, and it is evident that Dublin means to contribute largely to the gay gathering at Bective this forenoon. Pass we on now to the bridge over the Boyne, eagerly scanned by salmon fishers, glancing at Bective Abbey and its ivied cloisters; a turn brings us in a minute or two to Colonel Fraser's pleasant hunting box, under the very windows of which the tawny flood of the Boyne water seems to be continually passing seawards. I said the day was fine and frosty, and towards eleven o'clock a cheerful sun lit up the firs and laurels, the cohorts of carriages, and the legions of led horses that had taken up, or were taking up, positions all over the grounds. Accustomed to very plethoric meets, this strikes me as exceeding

ordinary limits, spite of Sandown and Croydon attractions, while the mere sight-seeing, pic-nicing, outing element is most conspicuously absent. In the brief postscript I added to my last week's letter I mentioned, I think, the names of a good many of the principal visitors, including the Dublin Castle party, the *aides-de-camp* in waiting, and the aides out of waiting. The science of venerie and woodcraft was illustrated by such representatives as the Marquis of Waterford, the Earl of Howth for fox-hounds, the Earl of Cork for stag-hounds, Lord Rossmore for harriers. Colonel Fraser, the host, was quite the Marquis de Carabbas, as far as horses went, as his stable seemed to be requisitioned for all weights and all colours. Whose is that very neat corky grey that Lady D. Boyle seems so happy on?—Colonel Fraser's. Whose is that lengthy blood-like chestnut, Famous, that carries Lady Rosamond Churchill so easily?—from the same stable, of course. How many he mounted besides Lord Waterford and Lord Listowel I cannot now say, merely remarking that the man would be fastidious who would decline a mount on the clever old-fashioned grey that he rode himself. A bright, beautiful scene, with the pack in the foreground, shepherded by Goodall and his staff. Every one seemed to have kept picked horses for the festive occasion, or else the average in Meath must be unusually good for the time of year. Time would fail, and space forbid, my dwelling on even the most noticeable features—on Captain P. Low's most perfect little equipage; on the Hon. Mrs. Donaldson's badger-coloured Little Wonder; on many horses of fashion and reputation; of the many *objets d'art* in Bective to please the cultured eye; of the *objets gastronomiques* to please a more imperative and clamorous sense; of subtle essences and *petits verres;* of two quaint foxes the gardener had designed in red sand; of the care the gallant colonel had shown for the hungry, thirsty crowd of pedestrians whom such a meet must attract. All this I must pass by, as the gay cavalcade is already in motion; and, strangely enough, we are passing by the belts of

woodlands near the Boyne, and are trotting on towards Navan, never pausing till we pull up at Churchtown, from which it will be recollected by your readers we had such a fine gallop a few weeks earlier in the season. A very small parallelogram of fir and gorse is Churchtown, and not many hundred yards from the road; so that 'tis not surprising that, on a dry, cold, crisp morning like this, ringing hoofs and grinding wheels should have scared away anything but a very sleepy, surfeited, and lazy fox. The trumpet sounds, and we are going somewhere else, when somebody brings word that the tenant of Churchtown has been viewed stealing away a few minutes ago. The hounds are on his line in a few seconds, and tell us, in language not to be mistaken, that he is not long in front. Philpotstown is but a few fields distant, and thither they hunted him fast. Having made arrangements to join the Ward Union hounds at Culmullen cross-roads at 1.30 p.m., and, as there was an interval of nearly ten miles between the places, I was obliged to leave our fox at this interesting crisis to his fate, and, facing a fierce hailstorm, that possibly saved the fox's life, trot on to Culmullen, reaching it just in time for the enlargement of the first red deer a few fields below Culmullen House eastward. There is a beautiful grass valley on either the northern or the eastern side of the little dividing range on which stands Culmullen House. Our deer plunged down eastward, but, unfortunately, some colley dogs had determined not to wait for the onslaught of the pack—"the regulars"—so they chivied the unfortunate quarry from the post. A charming line, for about a mile and a half; the pace was very good, and sustained, till a boundary fence of unjumpable calibre seemed to turn the deer as well as her pursuers. Soon after this she ran past "the Hatchet" in view, turned back, made a short ring almost over her foil, and was taken safely at "the Hatchet."

The next enlargement took place beyond Kilmore Parsonage, and was far happier, the deer crossing some heavy-going grass fields, rather widely dyked, and then running nearly up to Cul-

mullen House, where the field, who were getting the worst of it, had a turn in their favour. He then swept down the vale, and made Dunsany Park, where he was secured: fifty minutes very fast over a grassy line, no checks and no pauses. For further information I would recommend a consultation with Messrs. Hone and M'Gerr, who know all about it. I was amused at the remark of a rustic who had secured two loose horses, whose riders did not show. "Bedad, I can sell a horse now!" They were a good-looking pair, and, spite of the evidence of a fall, would not have been a bad investment for a few ponies, I think, if the title would have stood.

Apropos of good horses, it is gratifying to one's "guesses at horse truth" to find that Sultana and Abdallah, the two winners at Sandown last week, were honourably lauded in *The Field* on the occasion of a brief visit to Mr. Burton Persse's stables and kennels at Moyode Castle a few years ago; but it requires no prophetic mantle to cast a good chasing horoscope for the progeny of the Arab Maid and Thomastown.

The sequel to the "day's doings" in Meath (I mean the 5th inst.) was a long desultory sort of run from the inexhaustible Rathmore—the *pièce de résistance* for Meath's M.F.H.'s—by Tullaghnogue, Meadstown, and Kilbride, neither straight nor fast, but, as I can say from experience, over a country abounding in fences of large proportion, almost the largest. Men thought them serious; the ladies skimmed over them, I am told, with an *aplomb* all their own, the result of fine hands and great faith in their mounts—a faith which was not impaired by catastrophes. I also heard that Mr. Trotter's *pas seul* (if I may use the term) over most repelling-looking timber deserved the reward of a lead of twenty-five minutes in the fastest burst of the season, which, however, did not come off.

But the day must have been saddened to many, if not all, by a fearful accident which befel Mr. Murphy, of Braymount, a veteran sportsman, whose years had only brought him increase of friends. I did not see it, so can only report from description. He was

riding a three or four-year-old, who plunged or bucked, and unseated his rider by a gateway. With the instinct of an old sportsman, he held on to the reins when down, though begged to let them go, and his horse, probably thoroughly frightened, kicked him about the head and face till he was desperately wounded. Two hard-riding Saxons who were near (Captains Candy and Norris) did all that care could do till professional assistance arrived, and now, I hear, the doctors hope for the best.

Kildare is a meet which most Kildare men hold in little love or esteem, and when it comes on the roster in due course some are apt to develope suddenly extraordinary business aptitudes, while others take the occasion of visiting a neighbouring pack, running up to town, or wiping off arrears of correspondence; and yet it is never a blank day, or without three or four foxes turning up somewhere; and when there are foxes and miles of almost uninterrupted light grass all around, a fine run is always possible. The *désagrémens* of a Kildare meet are mainly the certainty of the presence of a crowd of pedigree horses, rather free of their hind legs, who are being "entered to fox-hounds," and perhaps "qualifying" for hunters' races. Then, though foxes abound, wild straggling gorse, clothing miles of hill ridge, abounds more, and after a few days' experience the ascent and descent of these steep pitches become monstrously wearisome to man and horse. On the other hand, it may be pleaded that the four or five miles' gallop over the Curragh on the way to the meet is worth any journey; that many masters in England and Scotland would rejoice greatly if the Dunmurry range and the neighbouring vale were added to their territory; that, in fact, the despising of Kildare and its hunting possibilities is mere fastidiousness resulting from a surfeit of good things; that the presence of platers is a necessary evil, which may be turned to profitable account during the coming season; and that one stiff bank or two or three hours' cub-hunting will weed the field of the entire company. As the bard said or sang—

"Non nostrum est tantas componere lites."

Suffice it to say that on this particular occasion Kildare was very popular among soldiers and civilians, who swelled the numbers of the field to most unwonted proportions. Conspicuous among the former was Colonel Bray, of the 4th of the line, on his good Arab hunter, at the head of a number of his brother officers. The day began rather badly at Dr. Chaplin's Gorse on the south side of the Curragh; it held a fox, and when he broke some impetuous men made a short cut through a viaduct, over which the metals of the Great Southern and Western line pass, headed him back into the jaws of the pack, and so lost their possible gallop. Two men, I hear, misjudging the height of this viaduct, got very nasty falls in passing through. The next move was to Dunmurry Hill, where four foxes were on foot together. One was hunted to the Green Hills and back twice, when he broke in the opposite direction, brushed by Dunmurry House (Mr. Medlicott's), by a hill known from its conformation as "the Chair of Kildare," then ran over a bit of swampy land, where much grief of the watery order followed, right up to Morristown Biller, Mr. Moses Taylor's residence, passed through his grounds, over the Newbridge racecourse, till I hear the hounds, hunting most perseveringly through small inclosures with waning and flickering scent, rolled him over at last. This was perhaps the longest run ever known from Dunmurry. To the lovers of recurring jumps, not too large, it was indeed a perfect treat in the way of riding. The Duhallow run with an outlying fox through Ballygiblin, and straight on to Roskeen, when he beat the pack to ground, is spoken of as a very fine pursuit, and fast. I forget the date, but it was on the day they met at Aughrim.

I had written this paragraph from the data of a friend, who had to catch a train and was not able to see the *finale*. I have since ascertained from one who rode this long run from beginning to end, and saw everything, that after his tour over Pollardstown and Mr. Moses Taylor's lands, the fox tried some earths at the rectory of Morristown Biller, crossing the Great Southern and

Western line to do so. They were sealed; so he recrossed the railway track in view, close by the Newbridge railway station, and, finding no haven or shelter near here, he boldly set out for the Hill of Allen, some four miles distant, which he reached in front of the pack—scent, which had been of the lowest all day, dying away to nothing as a sleet storm came on. Those who saw the dog-pack at work over this long nine miles (Irish), or rather more, which took more than two hours to accomplish, laud the performance greatly. It was this same pack who, under better auspices, killed their fox handsomely last Friday week after *the* run of the season, and after some ten miles of pace, which told out every hunter in the field.

On Tuesday the Meath hounds had what a Leicestershire man called a capital forty-six minutes from Bengerstown Gorse, one of their best strongholds of foxes.

I sing the stag! call him any opprobrious name you please—calf, jackass, what you will. After the enormous *levée* in his honour to-day, I—at least supposed to be a veracious chronicler, one who at any rate aims at veracity and accuracy, if he cannot at all times attain to it—feel bound to speak of the Ward Union quarry with the respect due to the motor of the finest, most fashionable, and largest array I have yet witnessed in Ireland—a gathering which Englishmen who were out looked upon with amazement, and which a pursuer from the shires whom I talked to on the subject thought a very magnificent display. I am not prepared to give you a catalogue of names, a list of the riders, or an enumeration of the rank and fashion that peopled the coaches, phaetons, T carts, and outside cars which are not quite extinct in our island as yet; but I hardly fancy that since the time of Henry VI. (and that includes a long cycle) Dunboyne has ever been the theatre of so splendid an assembly as graced its somewhat squalid market-place and fair green to-day. A *résumé* of a few of the "proceres" is all I can attempt here, as, to begin with, I am sure my eye did not take in half the comers. Of the crowd

I saw, I doubt whether I knew more than, or as much as, two-thirds; and, of these two-thirds, it would require a more faithful memory than mine to give a list at all approaching accuracy.

Ab Jove principium! Our Jupiter is H.R.H. Colonel the Duke of Connaught, mounted on Black Knight, and attended by Captain Maurice Fitzgerald, his equerry, and a number of the officers of his battalion of the Rifle Brigade, including Captains Lascelles and Bagot, Lord Clanmorris, and Mr. Wade Prosser.

The Castle party were expected, but something—a Drawing-Room imminent, I believe—prevented their attendance. The Staff, including Captains Kearney, Norris, Colthurst, Graves Sawle, Michel, Crosbie, etc., were out. Mr. Morrogh, looking none the worse for his leg so recently smashed, was out on wheels, and so was Mrs. Morrogh and party. Eight coaches, fairly and darkly freighted, made one think we had jumped into May and the Magazine; but one look at the thatched cottages, not to speak of a "dunderin', thunderin', rantin'" blast, laden with hail and sleet, brought me back to March and Dunboyne. Among these drags were Mr. O'Reilly's, Mr. Turbitt's, the Inniskillings', the 3rd Dragoon Guards', Captain Saunders's, Sir J. Power's, Mr. Close's. Among the visitors were Lords Cork, Listowel, Langford, Cloncurry, Maurice Fitzgerald, and Rossmore; Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Captain Tuthill, Miss Tuthill, and Miss Tynte, Captain and Mrs. Chaine, Mr. and Mrs. Dunville, Mr. and Mrs. Rose, Lieut.-Colonel Forster, Lieut.-Colonel Fraser, V.C., Mr. Trotter, Captain P. Low, the Messrs. Hone, Mr. Chadwick, Mr. Murphy, Sir J. Barrington, Captains Ward Bennett, Heaviside, and Mills; and Messrs. Ellis and Thompson, of the Inniskillings; Captain Parke, Mr. Massy Dawson, and officers of the 3rd Dragoon Guards; Lieut.-Colonel Sarsfield Green, R.H.A.; Captain Saunders, Mr. Waldron, and officers of the R.H.A. and 7th Fusiliers; Captain P. Butler, Mr. M'Farlane, Mrs. Maxwell and Miss Hamilton, Mr. and Miss Hussey, Mr. and Miss Coleridge, Mr. and Mrs. Jameson, Captain Saunders, and Dr. Swan. How many

hundreds (or thousands?) were assembled cannot be now told. My groom, a west-countryman, says he thinks he has seen as large gatherings in the Duke of Beaufort's country, when perhaps Gloucester, Bristol, Cheltenham, and Bath swelled a single meet; and for my own part I have lively recollection of a huge gathering at Badminton on an occasion when his Grace of Beaufort wished to have a quiet by-day for his guest the Prince of Wales, but which swelled into something enormous by luncheon-time. Lord Cork, whose recollection must embrace some very large assemblies at Maidenhead thickets and in the Harrow country, told me he thought the crowd compared in numbers with those he recollected when Master of the Buck-hounds; but in point of horseflesh he decidedly gave the palm to the Ward gathering. There was hardly a horse out that was not a hunter of some calibre, light, medium, or heavy; hardly a man was riding who did not mean to see some of the fun—which, judged by the carriages, looked like an early rehearsal of the Derby—if he could not compass the whole. I should have stated that the meet was originally printed on the card for Norman's Grove; but Dunboyne was selected, I suppose on account of its stable accommodation and greater capability of holding the aggregation of carriages and horses; fortunately, perhaps, for greater numbers were *not* desirable by any means. The assizes are going on now in Ireland, while Croydon has drawn off not a few of our regular hunting men. But we are at last in motion, leaving Dunboyne behind, crossing the Navan line, and in half a mile or so we turn into a green field, where the mixed multitude of red and darker colours take their places, for in a minute or two the pack will be laid on. Just now they are very quiet in a corner of the field by Charley and Jem Brindley's horses, a pair of greys—Charley's being the celebrated grey huntress of six or seven seasons, fresh as a four-year-old and blooming in condition. Away they go, with a crash of melody, while in a few seconds we are partially jammed in an opening in a quickset hedge large enough for several carts, or the coaches and

six which drive through Acts of Parliament, but not for this crowd —a field can be easily lost here. I think I lost more. There is a magnificent prospect before us—green fields, no woods or plantations—all open, undulating country! Nothing big has been jumped yet. Presently we come to the brook—I think the Pinkeen Brook—known here as the Caulstown River, margined by a slight bank with a considerable drop on the far side. A number have got safely over, for I see them a field ahead, and going fast. I believe C. Brindley, Lord Langford, and a host more got down, or well-nigh down, at it. My immediate predecessor, a south-country lord, is on his back grasping the reins, but happily on the right side. I hardly know him—indeed, I haven't the honour at all—but an introduction is not necessary in these struggles; so, landing safely, I hope he ain't hurt. "Not the least, but my horse can't jump one bit." It was a widish experience, and perhaps his hunter was more used to banks and walls in the land of his practice. On we go. It would be uninteresting and mere surplusage to tell the townlands we pass by and through. We have galloped by two farmsteads, and already some of us have—strange phenomenon!—picked our way over a bit of plough. The Fairy House grand stand is a landmark to our right, and now we cross the road over which so many thousands will probably be travelling to the Ward Union races next Easter Monday. There is a slight dwell here, and hunting slackens for a field or two as we pass Porterstown Farm. Presently I see a collision at a deep ditch, in which Mr. Murphy, of the Phœnix Park, who was going well up to this, is an undeserving victim to weight and the *vis major* —not drowned, however, for I see his head, *caput extulit undis*, appearing on the bank and able to tell of his knock-down. *The* place in this fence thus blocked, Colonel Forster happily lights on another, and leads us over gaily on his very hunting-like and clever grey mare. We have left Ratoath behind; hounds are sailing over wide green fields; fences, if large, are not intricate, and now we come to a road with a narrow cut leading into it, when I see

my immediate predecessor, or the flash of his boots, in the air, his horse's head gently pillowed on the far bank, the body seemingly in the water. Over the road, over two or three very large fields, and one biggish brook if the right place was not hit. I see some trees to the right, which I think belong to Lagore; some wide and rather steep fences meet us here, and require considerable energy, for we have been *going* nearly thirty minutes over this big country. I see a very heavy man—Mr. Meldon, brother to the M.P. for Kildare—taking them straight and well on a powerful chestnut still full of go. But now we are at Dunshaughlin Poor-house, well known to fox-hunting Meath.

The tide of hunting slackens again a little, as our quarry has crossed the road five minutes in front, as we hear from a rustic on a bank. And now the hounds are running once more, leading us over that very bit of country which was the track of the long-winded, stout fox, the hero of *the great Dunshaughlin run* a few *months* ago (I wish I could write *weeks*), over the very same big, safe, but very large double, which a loose horse does in grand style beside or in front of me. A great sedgy wide-topped bank. I believe a fox was lying basking on it, for Mr. Meldon presently views one away, and the hounds notice him too for a bit, faltering in their discrimination of odours. Then we work on into a small clump of trees, protected by a deep ditch, and a bit of quickset, which requires jumping; and here the Duke of Connaught's good black horse came down, after carrying his rider right well up to this point. Now we are on the verge of that *campo abominato* (so far as fences are concerned), the Bush Farm; some few enter it, the majority keep outside of it in a bight of land between the well-wired brook which protects this farm and the Navan line of rails; hounds race on. At one time it looks as if they would cross the metals, and a gate is handy here; but no! they turn provokingly to the left, and we are on the wrong side of brook and wire—a fair number who have persevered to this point of a chase which has well-nigh run out the sands of a full hour-

glass. The wire looks menacing, and the brook is of uncertain depth and bottom. In two places where cattle have gone to drink in summer the passes are barricaded up with solid trees, morticed, so to speak, into the adjacent banks. In vain to pull at them—they are solid as the Monument. Lots of volunteers get into the stream and 'tis something to learn that 'tis not deep, and that the bottom is not boggy. Lord Cloncurry, wading in valiantly, pulls down one section of wire for us ; but horses, perhaps rather jaded, instead of jumping at or on the far bank, are fain to jump in and stay there—so this place is choked up. Lower down, where this bight of land ends, I hear Lord Rossmore galloped down, put his horse into the stream, and cleared the solid timber fully four feet, I think, or more, judging from horseback, and got away in grand style. No one else was able to follow him, and I hope he caught the hounds for his own and his hunter's gallantry. Meantime we discovered a half-jumping, half-scrambling pass, and so we got clear. After galloping over a couple of fields, we land on the Dunboyne road near Woodpark, and learn that our quarry has run the road for a bit, and most opportunely for some who had long since given up pursuit and were wending their way homewards. The remainder of the run was principally road work, and I believe the chase extended beyond Kilrue, so that to-day's deer, if none the worse for his exertions in getting over some fourteen or fifteen miles of country and road, may be expected ere the season closes to stretch many a good hunter, and call on his stamina and staying powers to their utmost limits of tension. I see the Dublin dailies, or rather the leading one, make the run not only a very fine one, *which it was*, and over a superb country ; but a very tornado for speed, *which it was not.* Hounds ran merrily over a county which ought, if we dare predicate anything about so uncertain and unknown an element, to be a superb scenting line ; but hounds, this notwithstanding, dwelt three or four times—two of them, 'tis true, were at roads—and the mere fact that four or five heavy men who started indifferently caught

the pack by fair riding, and stayed with them, tells its own tale. Therefore, in one respect I agree with the verdict that, "as to the hunt itself, no finer one ever has been since that memorable one, some five years ago, when Lord Spencer took his English tenantry across, paying their expenses, and supplying them with *drags* and lunch at Dunboyne." As a chase, I have seen *many* with this pack that, in the criteria or elements which make up a fine run, rank in every way higher. Several ladies rode parts of the run, and rode right well. The roan horse so conspicuous on "the Hatchet" day in Meath went as well to-day for several miles. Another lady on a grey, going in her usual style of brilliancy and directness, met with a misadventure at a bank; but the grey that stayed on jumping beautifully all through, carried Miss Hussey, and I should think to that lady's thorough satisfaction. Lord Cork, who was riding a good bay, a hunter of Lord Howth's, saw the run admirably, and was pleased, as the most fastidious must have been, with his Ward Union experience. Pity it was, perhaps, that the Drawing-Room at the Castle prevented several ladies from "assisting" at the gathering. For my own part, holding that a perfect horsewoman of the right calibre, when well mounted, is a beautiful sight as she skims over the country, I maintain that Lady D. Boyle's absence from Dunboyne to-day marred the symmetry of our play—of our opera, shorn, as it was, of a *prima donna assoluta.*

On the same day—much about the same hour—Mr. George Brooke's harriers were discoursing beautiful music in the undulating pastures round Hortlands and Newtown, and the flatter lands near Donadea. It is no small praise, no little tribute of incense to their owner and master, to record that one or two of the hardest-riding men in the community elected this pack in preference to the Ward Union hounds, when both were equally accessible. Such is the fact, however, and their enterprise and contempt of rank, fashion, and numbers were duly rewarded.

If time allows me, I will certainly pay an early visit to the

neighbourhood of the Bush Farm, to take the true dimensions of the timber jump which Lord Rossmore's black hunter carried him over yesterday, including the water and slush (if any) at the bottom. This horse had made himself a splendid reputation in the hands of his late owner, Mr. M'Gerr; but few things attest a big heart more thoroughly than facing a solid barrier of wood, out of water, after a run of eight or nine miles. Glancing at the obstacle from horseback, I may have over-estimated the height, but I hardly think so.

The Meath hounds had a very large "Drawing-Room" or "Castle" meet at Woodlands, on Friday, the brilliancy of which was somewhat chequered by a dubious and damp morning. However, as it was, there was a goodly gathering of rank, fashion, and numbers. No sport resulted till Kilrue was reached late in the evening, when a fox broke away in sporting style, never hanging for an instant, and gave the diminished field a very brilliant fast gallop almost to Oldtown, coastways five miles I should think, perhaps more—done very fast, specially the early stage.

In sending off an account of last Wednesday's proceedings with the Ward Union hounds, I omitted to mention a number of particulars and incidents, fearing to overcrowd your columns. So the brilliant cannon made on Charley Brindley and his grey mare by an impetuous, unrestrained horse and horseman, which lodged him in the pocket of a deepish brook, and the untimely fate of a promising steeplechase mare, the property of a noble and popular lord, were unsaid and unsung. The sequel of the latter *contretemps* deserves a passing allusion. She was ridden by Clarke, the trainer, a most careful, judicious man, and his lordship's answer to a letter from him, full of sorrow for the accident, was characteristic: "If you are not hurt, Clarke, I'm rather glad than otherwise, and should not grieve much if a similar fate befel two others in training for chasing," by which I gather that the peer has trained off racing and chasing—the theory and science of which he thoroughly understands. I should also have stated that the deer of Wednesday was a celebrity—Enfield.

XXIII.

"'Mid lowering skies, o'ercast and tinged with red,
Sol, slowly rising, quits his ocean bed."

Woodlands lawn, meet at—Kilrue—Bellinter harriers—Dunshaughlin—Reisk Gorse—Mr. Preston's stables and pack—Louth.

Early rising must be an admirable discipline, seeing it is so full of mortification, not only to the flesh, but also to the spirit. I have ceased to wonder that those happy few who have attained to these pinnacles of virtue and good habits, should wear a somewhat Pharisaic air, and look down on the less gifted denizens of Sleepy Hollow and dear Dreamland! Well may they enlarge the phylacteries of their admonitory prosings. They have the start of us. They have caught the early worm! They may talk to us weaker vessels in a stern *ex cathedrâ* tone. It is always unfortunate, I think, that nature should not be propitious unto those who, lethargic by habit, temperament, and weakness of will, make occasionally a mighty spasmodic effort to shake off dull sloth, and so on. On Friday morning nature was not in a pleasant mood to commune with. There had been a continuation of what one may call the light flying frosts of the last week. Then succeeded an abortive snowstorm, which slided imperceptibly into sleet. And then, lastly, the genius of Ireland vindicated herself. Hibernia Plorans wailed much and long, and draped herself in a sable livery of inky clouds. Under these circumstances, many hundreds to whom a meet of the Meath hounds at Woodlands is a *jour férié*

in their annual calendar, set out for the trysting-place. An itinerary, which I should think veracious, tells me the distance to Woodlands is about seven miles from Dublin, in a nor'-westerly direction—if so, they are the briefest miles I ever travelled—more like the French kilometer, to my thinking, than the drawling, never-ending mileage of this island, which I should think, Fin Ma Coul, or some giant of their days, invented for his own behoof.

> "Those Irish miles, those Irish miles,
> O how their slow-pac'd measure riles!"

Woodlands itself is approached by two routes from the metropolis, the lower one winds in and out with the sinuous gliding Liffey, which it borders, and from it a capital view is obtained of a land flowing with strawberries and cream (in summer), the sunny slopes and terraces extending from the upper ground by the Phœnix Park, right down to the river's edge, or rather the roadside; the other is more enjoyable if you are riding, for it leads all through the Phœnix Park—grandest of all city parks; to which the Bois, the Central, the Prater, the Prado, the parks of Hyde or Regent are mere toys; and here you can indulge your hunter or covert hack with a series of half-mile spins over short old turf, just now in the primest "going" condition, to which advantage you may add the fact that it seems considerably shorter. It was not my fate to approach Woodlands by either of these picturesque routes; and coming suddenly into the park avenue from a country by-road, I confess I was surprised at the amazing vehicular procession that was converging towards Lord Anally's fine castellated mansion, which, besides its great intrinsic beauties, has a special interest to many a good sportsman and hard rider on either side the Channel, in that it is indentified with Colonel the Hon. Charles White, now, to the regret of many—grievously ill—and forced to seek health under southern skies (his nephew, the Hon. L. White is out to-day). The Earls of Carhampton once owned this splendid park, whose hanging woods, wilderness of gorse,

lakes, and cascades, make it full of charming and most varied vistas of beauty. It was then called Luttrellstown, and there is a room in the castle in which 'tis said King John slept. Who lorded it over these broad lands prior to them, 'twere hard to trace now; for the panorama of history shifted its scenes very quickly in this neighbourhood, and Roderick O'Connor, the last king of Ireland, and General Monk—to come to later times—were busy with their men of war about here. Tradition points to a flour mill under Woodlands as built on the site of one which went by the name of the Devil's Mill, as having been erected by Shitan in the dark hours of a single night. Whom have we here? nay, rather whom have we not? The park of 700 acres seems peopled. Dublin is equitant and on wheels. I cannot attempt anything like even an outline of the company—*c'est plus fort que moi.* Conspicuous, however, on the greensward was the viceregal brake, with its four stately brown horses and smart outriders. It held a large party of ladies, among whom were the Marchioness of Drogheda, Lady Powerscourt, Lady Dorothy Boyle, Lady Mildred Coke, and Lady May Coke. There were *aides-de-camp* in waiting and aides out of waiting. The Duke of Connaught did not show, but his equerry, Captain Fitzgerald, was here, and I think he had mounted Captain Crosbie. The Earl of Huntingdon has given himself a day's leave of absence, and is surveying the Meath bitches from the back of a very smart cob. Lord Rossmore has come from Culmullen; Lord Langford from Summerhill; General Seymour is here from the Curragh. The Inniskillings form a small field in themselves. Their colonel, the Hon. C. W. Thesiger, and the senior major, Billington, being both out; Captain the Hon. T. Scott, Lord Cloncurry, Mr. Charles Hamilton, General and Miss Irwin, Mr. Bellany, Mr. Bayley, Mr. Love, Captain and Mrs. Davis, and several more hail from Kildare. The horse talent of the metropolis is represented by Messrs. M'Grane, Manly, M'Donald, Hillier, Murphy Gavacan, and I know not how many besides; while Mr. Schawel, of Vienna, is ready for sport or business if so be his quick eye can see any-

thing good enough for the kings and kaisers of his *clientèle*. The Ward Union men are here in force, for they have no stag to chivy to-day, having had a most prosperous by-day near Navan yesterday, when Mr. Turbitt's drag-hounds and a few couple from Ashbourne found a truant stag at Dunmoe, and hunted him hard for thirty-seven minutes, till he was fain to take refuge in Stakillan, where he fought fiercely before he yielded his liberty to Jem Brindley and his assistant; nor should I forget the fourth estate and its representatives.

> "The 'special's' eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heav'n to earth, from earth to heav'n;
> And, as imagination bodies forth
> The form of things unknown, the special's pen
> Turns them to copy, gives to airy nothings
> A local habitation and a name."

The coverts of Woodlands are run through, but if their fox has not seen the list card, as some aver foxes do, he has heard the grinding of wheels for three-quarters of an hour, and the prancing of innumerable horsemen; so he has vacated their haunts, and we too now pass on to Hollywood Rath, three or four miles distant—often a sure find, to-day foxless, but not foodless or wineless. Here a fresh array of sportsmen turn up—men whose experience told them they were not likely to have *the* run of the season from Woodlands. The day brightens, the air is warm and muggy, and altogether things look far more like hunting in comfort than a couple of hours ago. Ballymacarney is our next point of investigation—a splendid gorse, but requiring a great deal of drawing. The last time we were here "we made ante-chamber," as the Gauls say, to a most reluctant home-sick fox for an hour or so, who mocked us at last by emerging for a field or two, and then retiring to his fortress. That day the weather was fearful. To-day the waiting was very bearable, the air was so spring-like, and the hounds were so full of tongue in the gorse that every moment we expected the signal, and it does come at last—a bank

and ditch are jumped or crept up, and two fields are galloped over, when our fox is viewed stealing back. There are a good many footpeople between him and his gorse, and they do all they can to cut him off; but his point is made good notwithstanding, nor will he leave even after half an hour's more dusting through the thicket. His vixen has come back too, and here they mean to stay. Like MacMahon in the Malakoff, *ici je suis et j'y reste* was the watch-word of each, and they carried it out, wearing out our master's patience. Half an hour more sees a long train trotting along the well-known causeway to Kilrue Gorse, which is looked upon as a certain find; nor did it either disappoint or detain us ten minutes. Away they flash in purple and white and black over the green fields towards Kilrue ruins long before the tail men (of whom I was one) get into the covert field. To gallop back over the causeway and cut in with them, if they turned to the right, seemed the wisest course. I tried it, with bad effect, my horse slipping on the greasy stones, and giving his rider and himself a wrench. The ruins are past by a select few now, but no sign of hounds or horsemen is visible. I see some footprints, so galloping on, jumping a few singles, at last I get near them in Fleenstown; but I have gone too fast to put on an extra spurt here, and they seem going faster than I can now. Some larch-covered little knolls appear on the left hand; will the fox try them? How selfish it is, doubtless, to long for a check; but how fervently we pray for one! None, however, is forthcoming, and the Ashbourne road is now reached; a small hedge and ditch leads out of it into a large grass field known as the Moated Field, down its length we gallop, jump into, or gate it into, a by-road, pass by the chapel of Donoughmore, follow Macadam's pathway for a few hundred yards, jump a stone-faced bank, to find ourselves in a valley through which flows a stream known as the Broad Meadow Water, which seems to have two or three branches. The first is wired, only the strands have been pulled down in a convenient spot, the next requires force, and causes delay, and now fording the brook

we wind up a furzy glen, over which I watched stag-hounds hunting beautifully some six or seven weeks ago (the scene just looking like a fox-hunt) on to the table land; above this there is a check of a few moments. This is Greenoge, very familiar to Ward Union men, and then fast and slow the line leads on to Fieldstown, and, I believe, close to Oldtown, where the pack were stopped, owing to the late hour and distance from the kennels. A stone-faced bank just at the end emptied one or two good saddles; but of this latter part I cannot profess to give any account, having stopped near the wired brook, finding my horse very lame; nor did I see any of the run, save in a diminishing perspective. I fancy, though not very long (five or six miles), it will be held a very good one, and I think the bit from Kilrue to Donoughmore Chapel, or even to the furzy glen, was brilliantly fast. Some fifteen or eighteen men alone stayed on to the close out of the vast number at the gathering point, among them the master, Mr. Dunville, Lords Rossmore and Langford, Mr. Trotter and Messrs. Butler, Chapman, Loyd, Rose, Bayley, Thunder, M'Donough, Captain P. Butler, and Mr. Kennedy. Curiously enough, the following day found some of our party pursuing a flying stag in much the same tract of country; for, on Saturday, the 10th inst., one of the most gloriously fine days we have been vouchsafed hitherto, the Ward Union hounds went forth from their kennels to meet a large throng of carriages, coaches, and riders by the ninth mile-stone on the Dublin road. When I say *coaches*, there were possibly two or three, but I can only speak from observation of one, that of the 3rd Dragoon Guards, which was pretty fairly filled; but of riders there was a very large number. The programme of the day was to enlarge the deer (a red one) close by the kennels; so we rode right through the yard at Ashbourne, and in the very next field the hounds started off at score, as if they were going to take us to the village of Ballymadun; but a sharp turn at right angles brought us to a road where there was a delaying fence; across it, and over about a mile

or rather more of sound grass land, very irregularly fenced. Soon after this we gained a view near another road, the boundary fences of which had a depleting effect on our plethoric field; and then we got into rather a nice bit of grass country, which for this year rode marvellously light and springy; now Oldtown village being passed on the left, a beautiful tract of light grass trends on seawards, Lambay Island rears its tall form out of the ocean right in front of you; and to tell you of your whereabouts, supposing you are somewhat *de paysè*, like myself, the white steam from a locomotive floats away on the thin air current, and this proves that we are on the verge of the northern line. At this point I retired from the fray, having the prospect of a very long ride homewards; but I learnt next day that pursuit was carried on with unslackened vigour to a point near Balriggan, double the distance, and a good deal more than I had travelled myself, and that about twenty-five saw the finish right well, among whom was a Louth lady, whose steering in a very intricate country (to use mild language) elicited much praise from my informant.

Friday was, I hear, very propitious to a small field of about thirty, who met the Bellinter harriers at Scurlockstoun, a place not far from Larracor, of fox-hunting and Diaconal celebrity. Fortunate in meeting a stout hare at once, a traveller possibly, they took him or her on by Miltown and Bragganstown to Kilcarty, thence into Dunsany Park by the Black Lodge, as 'tis called, and there a fresh hare interrupted the even tenor of the pursuit for a few minutes; but the mistake was soon righted, and the bitches drove their quarry on to Batter John, and then to Kilteel, which place proved fatal to this good hare's powers of endurance.

Few of hare pursuits have exceeded this run of Friday last in brilliancy this season or any other season. Those familiar with the country make this chase about eight miles, done in a little over the hour; and men whose experience ranges over many packs extol it as a very fine performance. On the map it measures well, and confirms the statements made about its distance. On the

whole it was a white-stone day, if not the very whitest in the *acta* of this beautiful pack. They had some more hunting in the evening, but not worthy of record.

My programme for Monday, the 12th, was, I confess, an ambitious one, involving much travelling, and depending for its fulfilment on a happy combination of circumstances.

The Meath hounds met at Bellinter; a lawn meet, sure to be fashionably and numerously attended; and where detaining influences, in the shape of a self-imposed necessity of visiting a beautiful interior and possibly wandering on to the breakfast-room, promised at least a quarter of an hour's law. My wish and intention was to visit Bellinter early, spend some time in the kennels there, join the Meath hounds, and see the first page of its day's diary carried out in action; then, cantering along some five miles of turf sidings, reach Gerrardstown Gate in time to cast my lot in with the Ward Union hounds, who were told off for that fixture at 1.30 p.m. The precise punctuality of the stag-hounds was the rock ahead, on which I feared my intentions were likely to founder. As it fortuned, I may say, like the Yankee young lady when asked how she liked a certain very grand concert, "I guess there was nary a hitch in the machinery."

Beginning with the morning, nothing could well have been more discouraging. A gale, rain-laden, was blowing hard from the west, and the vestiary barometer certainly pointed to overalls, leggings, and a rough-and-tumble plough-country get-up. By 7 a.m. things mended a bit, and faith in the shepherd's saw, "rain at 7, fine at 11," was a flattering unction to cheer one on the long, straight, and somewhat dreary road between Dunboyne and Bellinter; which, however, if tradition be reliable, is rich in points of historical interest and illustration of the earlier annals of our island, civil and ecclesiastical. As our early friend and foe Horace says, *Sed non nunc erit his locus.* Bellinter has been happily reached, the kennels and stables there visited, of which we will hope to say something by-and-by. Just now the signs and tokens of a

populous meet fill the eye and absorb our attention; a word or two of preliminary description will clear the way. Bellinter, Mr. Preston's residence, is a fine square stone building, with wide wings, entered by a rather long flight of handsome steps. I should think it dated from the era of the earlier Georges, and was the country seat of the Lords of Tara, whom Mr. Preston represents. The views to the south and west embrace the Boyne and its valley, with Bective just opposite the breakfast-room windows. In front is a very spacious court-yard, and beyond it the level park, girt by a wide belt of old timber, while in its centre is a private racecourse marked out by white posts. Tara, of poetic fame, which Moore's threnody has made a household word to so many, rears its gentle elevation just beyond the park; while, fringing the Boyne, a little beyond Bellinter, are Ardsallagh and Dowdestown demesnes. The court-yard is now choke-full of carriages and led horses; two strong currents are setting in opposite directions, one to the buffet and breakfast-room, the other outwards. Among the absentees for several weeks from the Meath hunting field was the Marquis of Headfort—he is here to-day—and so are Lords Howth and Langford, Lady Wallscourt and Lady E. Stanhope, Lieut.-Colonel Fraser, V.C., General Herbert and party, Lady Stourton and party, Mr. Trotter, Mr. Howard, Captains Kearney, M'Calmont, Smith, Davidson, Colthurst, and Lowe; the Messrs. Tiernan from Louth, and any number of Meath's sons and daughters, including Miss Waller, Mr. and Mrs. Garnett, Major and the Hon. Mrs. Donaldson, Major and Mrs. Johnson, Mr. and Miss Winter, Mr. and Mrs. Briscoe. The half of an hour I hoped for has been thinned to well-nigh thirty minutes, pleasantly spent I am sure by many and most of our assembly, for the day has changed for the better, and is now rainless and comparatively still. A fox is found in the woods near the Balsoon Gate very quickly; he very considerately swings past the house of Bellinter and the Kennel Woods, giving the lady gallery a good view of the proceedings; circles round to the

Lismullen entrance, and, crossing some water meadows, re-entered Bellinter, and in his second exodus beat the pack out of scent near Killmessan station. Dowdestown was the second draw, and I left them approaching its confines—having a very scanty margin of time left for my canter to Gerrardstown Gate. Before leaving Bellinter, let me record rather a smart *riposte* of a noble lord in the field to-day. There is a colony of peafowl at Bellinter, who seem to increase and multiply exceedingly, spite of the foxes in their vicinity. Bad tenants for villas and places on a small scale, they are beautiful as a garden in motion when they have ample scope and large buildings to set them off, as here. To-day I saw no peahens about, so I suppose they were better occupied; but the peacocks were strutting about everywhere, and spreading their tails out like fans. A certain light cavalry captain, whom we look on as the glass of fashion and mirror of sartorial neatness, whose appointments are always faultless, whose horses are most workmanlike, suddenly rode into the stable-yard, and, like Japanese fans, outspread I know not how many peacocks' tails, to the confusion and terror of a handsome young horse he was riding. He had just finished his peacock story, when Lord —— cut in with, "They were jealous of you, P.! depend on't, they were jealous of you!" Before setting off for Gerrardstown presently, I should mention that this pack had a capital hunting run yesterday from Balrath, two rings round the huge fields of the place, then a break into the country leading on towards Rathmore, then a turn into Allenstown, and a finish at the Hill of Faughan.

A very liberal road is that leading from Lismullen (Sir J. Dillon's) Park to Gerrardstown Laurels fox-covert, with good sidings, on which you might almost train a chaser. Their presence enabled me to be in ample time for the stag-hounds, with five minutes to the good to change horses and look about. A large meet it was, but almost exclusively of horsemen, for the carriage element was conspicuously absent. I shall not give a list even of the notables I can recollect, merely remarking that the

3rd Dragoons and Inniskillings were in strong force, and that the hard-riding element was prevalent. In a few minutes we learn that our object to-day was to catch, if possible, a truant deer, who had been at large for many weeks and had wandered off from Moyglare to Kilbrew, where he was last seen. The deer cart was in attendance in case we missed the outlaw, so we may be said to have had two strings to our metaphorical bow. Pleasant paths through wide pastures led us to Kilbrew; and we had just reached the rustic bridge which spans the brook by the stick covert and plantation, when Charley Brindley's quick eye caught a glimpse of our deer just outside the grove of trees. Hounds were clapped on at once. We have a mile or so of grass galloping, without any special necessity for jumping, as there is, strange to say, a line of open gates for the entire distance. Then we get among inclosures. Hounds are running fast, and we are confronted soon by a very large bank and brook, which a steady, well-trained, and rather sticky horse would do far better and safer than a bold, high-couraged, flying hunter, for it seems too large to cover at a single spring. Presently I see Mr. M'Gerr on the far side of it, with the pack all round him. I fear his intrepidity was but ill rewarded, as I think the move only led to an even more difficult and bigger obstacle. We who decline to follow his lead, have the alternative of a *quasi* ravine, which cannot be jumped, and can only be descended by a sort of Toboggining process, with which horses in this country should and ought to be familiar, ere they can be termed "hunters." Jem Brindley gets over this chasm first; some wait for their turn, others gallop round, to cut in presently. After a mile or two we are trotting through the main street of Dunshaughlin, our deer having skirted it to the left, crossing a bit of swampy land, not quite safe for riders, I fancy. Then we gallop across the lands of Newtown, cross the Navan line, and are streaming away, apparently bound for Piper's Hill; when we find that our deer has turned to the right, run over the shoulder of Cultromer Hill (a very small elevation it is), and

dipping into the valley, has crossed the by-road from Culmullen and Batterstown; thence it is about a mile or a mile and a half over an easy grassy line to "the Hatchet," where he turned sharp to the right, was pursued to Mulhussey, though not at express pace, and here, owing to some wrong information from a native, acted on by the staff, the clue was totally lost. It was, in my opinion, a very fine pursuit over a splendid line, the which, if a fox could be induced to travel twice in his lifetime in front of a pack, he ought to be made free of every hen-roost and pheasant-covert in the county. What prevented the last five or six miles of it being quite first-class was a fact which I only learnt the day after, namely, that two or three hard-riding men, whose experience ought to have made them more considerate to their fellows, and whose riding prowess requires no new proofs, having been temporarily thrown out by some mischance or other, met two couple or so of the hounds who were leading a long way ahead of the body of the pack, by a road or railway bridge (I forget which at the moment), and incontinently went away with them, to the detriment of our line, who were with the main body of the pack some fields in their rear. They took on their deer a mile or two further than the point where the pack threw up—by Moyglare and the Police Barrack—till "the Duke," whom I should have introduced formally to your readers before this, took to a stream and became thoroughly master of the situation.

I learnt the day after that by my rapid spurt to Gerrardstown Gate, I had six to four the best of the fun, the Meath proceedings having been marked by mediocrity and tameness. Lismullen foxless to-day (for a wonder); Slator's Gorse tenanted 'tis true, but by a most domestic, nostalgic type of fox; while the hunting from Walshe's Gorse, towards Somerville, backwards and forwards, though edifying to hound men, was not sufficiently animating to please a field so fastidious as the Meath.

Vento rubet aurea Phœbe! This a certain gentleman rendered "Phœbe blushes for the wind." Very true and literal no doubt;

hardly, however, explanatory of the poet's idea, which I take it was that when wind was imminent the golden orb of the moon became suffused with red; for the present, however, the literal version will suit our meaning best, and we will hope that Phœbe, none other than Diana of the chase, has incarnadined her brows and bowed her classic head at the tumult of rushing winds and passionate gusts which have prevailed for many hours, with hardly an interval of pause or respite. There have been showers, but not heavy enough to lull the wind force, and 'tis needless to remark that the plague of winds has been most hostile to hunting (by the way, the *New York Herald* foretold it most accurately). On the morning of the 13th inst. the wind, which had been on the riot all night long, did not appear in the least subdued or worn out, but there was a black horizon all around, which looked as if rain would be our portion ere many hours, and rain of the heaviest kind. As the day wore on, however, the rain menace disappeared, blue became the ruling colour above, the sun shone out quite in strength at intervals, and but for that almost ceaseless leonine wind, we could have said many pleasant things about the day and its dispensations.

The Meath hounds were announced as meeting at Dunshaughlin on Tuesday, the 13th, a non-hunting Ward day. A state ball at the Castle on Monday night has in itself paved the way for a large accession to the ordinary Meath field, for the only rival is the Kildare meet at the flag-staff, Curragh Camp; neither comparable in distance, convenience, country, nor surroundings, and moreover more dangerous (to hats at least) in such windstorms as we are now experiencing. My Dunshaughlin experiences do not carry me back very many years; but certainly I never saw a smarter meet in the county than to-day's, and the lateness of the hour of drawing—high noon—enabled one to take leisurely surveys of the gala field. H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught is to the fore with his equerry, Captain M. Fitzgerald, Captain Bagot, and officers of the Rifle Brigade. The 3rd

Dragoon Guards send Captain Parke, Mr. Hartigan, Mr. Wardrop, and Mr. Dundas, the latter none the less cheery though His Lordship did *not* win the International at Croydon, as many hoped; of the Inniskillings are Captains Bloomfield, Mills, Mr. Ellis, and others. There is what the Yankees call a "ring" of ladies, which term the pleasant gossiping author of "The Two Americas" explains by supposing that "'tis because there is no end to them." From Louth, Dublin, and Meath do they muster, beautifully mounted for the most part, and faultlessly appointed; among the district visitors or visitors to the district being Lady Macnaughten, the Hon. Mrs. Donaldson, Mrs. Osborne, the Misses Smith, the Misses Gradwell, Miss Coleridge, Mrs. Greenhill, Miss Hussey; Major-General Herbert is here with Captain Crosbie; half the Dublin staff is in the field, and not a few Ward Union pursuers. Kildare contributes its quota. Lord Howth shows his loyalty to hunting by turning his back on his salmon fishing in the Blackwater and Boyne, where his keeper killed a 35lb. fish yesterday or the day before (I forget which). Lord Rossmore has done his friends a kindness by giving convincing proof that he is still sound in wind, neck, and limb, though the two latter have been so frequently imperilled of late. Fair women, brave men, good horses; give us now but a resolute point-making fox in the Poor-house Gorse, and we shall be content in spite of this tempest, which makes us keep our heads at a most unpleasant angle, lest a *capful* of wind should make us *hatless* for the day. While on the subject of hats, I may mention that a gentleman of the 3rd Dragoons showed a noble disregard to his headgear yesterday when hunting with the Ward Union hounds, for he lost his somewhere about the first large fence, and rode some eight or nine miles in the best style without it. To-day the most sensibly dressed head I saw was a young gentleman's, who wore one of those old-fashioned sort of travelling nightcaps which tie under the chin and cover the ears well. I suppose his hat had been blown to foreign parts early in the day. The

Poor-house Gorse was soon vocal, but whether a dog or vixen was chopped there I cannot say. A few fields reached, fortunately by open gates, bring us to Lagore. We search its clumps of trees, but search in vain, so the body venatic moves on in long file to the Reisk Gorse. Here the find was quick as a flash of thought; the departure nearly as rapid. Green fields of large area; open gates worthy of Saxondom; a dip down into Kilbrew valley; a brook and jump if you haven't patience to go for a bridge; three or four wide grass fields (on ground with the inclination dead against you); then you reach a road, cross it, and run parallel to it for a few fields; then a return over the same grassy hill and valley, a wide-sunk fence to jump, or avoid if you can, and you are at the ruins of Kilbrew House, which, as the Yankees say, must have been "quite a place" in old times; the offices are in semi-ruin, the old garden wall is in fair order. The hounds hunt up to the latter, and there all trace of our fox vanishes mysteriously, and no casting regains the clue. He must have lain down somewhere while the pack, who had been driving at tremendous pace, flashed over him; for fifteen minutes hounds ran extremely fast, and scent seemed superb. The remainder of the day may be dismissed in a line or two. Corballis, Corbalton, Gerradstown, blank; some larking and tumbling about, in which a noble peer was the choragus; an early dispersion trainwards and homewards. Much of the gossip—I should say horse gossip of hunting fields—is now about the imminent Red-coat races which loom in the nearer and remoter distances: remoter in Meath, where the friendly contest will come off towards the close of April; nearer in Kildare, where the date is fixed for, I think, the 4th proximo. I understand H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught will be an actor in the latter, and I fully expect to see one, at least, of his hunters play a prominent part in the light-weight class. In addition to these prizes for hunters, who are still in possession of the attributes of soundness and freshness (not "the wild freshness of morning"), I understand that there will be a

repetition on a better scale of the spring one-day meeting at the Maze, which gave so much pleasure last year to multitudes from Belfast and the surrounding district, combined or falling in with the Killultagh harrier Red-coat races. Lord Cole gives a valuable cup for genuine hunters carrying 15st. each, two miles on the flat; Lord E. Hill's generous patronage is directed to a lighter class of hunters. Altogether there seems every reasonable prospect of the hunting season of 1876–77 expiring brilliantly, and not waning into inanition.

The capital invested annually in hunting in our islands now amounts to *millions*. I leave statisticians to squabble over the precise figures, as in such magnificent proportions a few thousands more or less does not matter much. My second postulate will be conceded freely, I fancy, by men of experience and common sense—that is, that hunting over grass is the cream of sport for men, hounds, and horses. Hunting over ploughs and clays is in comparison but mudlarking—an inferior pastime, slower and less spirit-stirring—

"As sunlight unto moonlight, or as water unto wine."

It is far more expensive in the wear and tear of horseflesh, far more injurious to the farmer! Having laid down these axiomatic platitudes, let me state that in a very short run in Meath on Monday with the fox-hounds my horse never trod a bit of plough, nor did he ever leave turf in the afternoon in a run of some eight or nine miles with the stag-hounds (half a mile or so of voluntary road work being excepted). During a long, desultory, bad day with the Meath fox-hounds (yesterday), relieved only by a twenty minutes' gallop of great pace and brilliancy, your scribe cannot recollect having been off turf for a moment, running or drawing. These are pregnant facts, and your readers may possibly find profit in their application.

"Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
(Bordeaux for choice)
A land of plough shall ne'er be mine!"

Wednesday, the 15th, was ushered in with showers and wind, but the afternoon was beautifully clear, crisp, and enjoyable. Those who went, like myself, to meet the Ward Union hounds at Rathbeggan had their journey for nothing, as the pack did not meet, in consequence of the death of Mr. Maxwell, of Cruise Rath. Known personally to many of the readers of *The Field*, and, I believe, loved by as many as knew him—a master of harriers within a few miles of such a metropolis as Dublin, where land is, of course, much enhanced in value for dairy and grazing purposes, his hounds were always welcomed with whatever field they brought. A number of friends recently presented Mr. Maxwell with his portrait, surrounded by a few couple of his favourite hounds, sitting on his most confidential hunter.

Those who aver that Ireland is not a country where *finish* is appreciated, ought to visit the kennels and stables of Bellinter, a place to which I have already introduced your readers in this letter. Overlooking the Boyne valley, with drainage naturally good and perfected by care, the most fastidious might spend an hour or two here without finding out, save through the ear, the presence of twenty-five or thirty couple of hounds in their benches and lodgings close to him. A laurelled walk of a few hundred yards leads to them from the house, and two well-burnished brasses, with "Kennels" and "Letters" on a postern, arrest the eye at once. No need for whip or overcoat, as Suter, the huntsman, draws each bitch; she "suffers herself to be admired," then proceeds leisurely to the next lodgings, or outer court, to join the other objects of criticism. Mr. Preston has been years in getting this pack to its present high standard, and many of the smartest fox-hound kennels have sent him drafts after drafts of their smaller hounds (bitches), and these have been weeded and weeded till none but the best and fittest remained. Hence they are harriers by profession, but fox-hounds of the purest pedigree by race; and so well have they entered to hare, that few packs in Ireland can show more trophies this season. Naturally their pace is very

good, or men like Lords Howth and Rossmore, Captains Candy and Dundas, would not throw in their lot with them—very beautiful singly, it is as a pack they should be seen; so I will only remark that the Carlow and Island Brilliant of three seasons' experience, Bella of one, the White Rose, the Black Sociable, with Wistful and Priestess, struck me as gems. After a glance at the benches and their occupants, you will find a very comfortable sitting or smoking room, writing materials, sporting prints, and no "compound of vile smells" to affect enjoyment. In Suter, Mr. Preston has a most able adjutant. The stables are full of hunters of the highest class and type—blood, bone, shape, and performance being qualifications without which no horse enters these boxes, or, if an impostor finds his way there on false pretences, he is very soon eliminated. Grey is Mr. Preston's favourite colour, hence the fact that the boxes are full of greys, and that only a single bay catches the eye as you go round. A very singular-looking horse he is too, some seventeen hands high, with shoulders so far thrown back that the saddle space seems, if possible, too small; once, however, you see him move, the perfection of the machinery is apparent, and a gallop on him is like rushing through the air in one of Howard's easy chairs. Snow Queen is conspicuous for her length, everywhere combined with power; her fired hocks do not impair her looks one bit. Star Shower is stronger and compacter, perhaps, and more suited for choice to a high-banked country. Lazy Larry saw service in the south among stone-faced banks, which left their marks on him; he is a grand weight-carrier. One or two greys that Mr. Preston drafted recently are very high-class horses; one of them, Fairy Queen, has raced very fairly, and will probably do so again. The stables, forming the left wing of the house, with their Titanic stone pillars and high vaulted roof, look as if they had been built by one of the Moguls for his white elephants, so solid are they and capacious.

Defective earth-stopping spoilt promising sport in Louth. On

the 6th they met at Collon, but the fox of the place got too good a start for the scent which prevailed. Skedog gave them a very good eighteen minutes by Shanliss and Drakistown to Curracon, where the fox went into a burrow. Digging produced a brace—a dog and vixen, and a few precious moments were lost in putting the pack on to the former, who occupied them till nightfall. From Townley Hall they had a sharp twenty-two minutes to Rossine on the 9th; a Louth fox was killed at once. Mellifont furnished a brace. They went away well with one over Louth Hill into Townley Hall and through the park, when he, too, got into a burrow. The Curraghmore hounds seem to have had another fine gallop from Rathgormack on the 13th, and a shorter one from Ballyneil in the afternoon.

The Kildare hounds, after a week of very poor sport, had a capital run from Gingerstown Gorse on Tuesday, to which I must refer in my next.

The Westmeath hounds, after a moderate morning, had a most animating and exciting gallop from Galston Park on Monday, the 19th, particulars of which I must send you in my next.

The Ward Union hounds had a capital second run on Patrick's evening from Ashbourne to the Naul, and a very pleasant circular gallop on Monday. Space prevents my enlarging on any of them here.

XXIV.

"Ah, how shall I in song declare,
The riders who were foremost there?
A fit excuse how shall I find
For every rider left behind?"

Trim and Trimlestown—Mullingar meet—Bellavilla—Bill Ryan—The dancing 6th.

"THE third day comes a frost, a killing frost," says England's great Cardinal through the mouth of Shakespeare, and the words are apposite to our present situation here! We have had a few light, beautiful days, too crisp and gaudy perhaps for hounds. The country has dried up with a rapidity perfectly marvellous, to the great joy of husbandmen. The brimming rivers have shrunk back to their old bounds. Dry leathers and tops immaculate have rejoiced the hearts of valets; broader horizons have expanded to our view. The grass lands have cast off their slough of winter and autumn, and glittered once more in emerald hues. It almost seemed like a new heaven and a new earth inchoate, warm with the breath of Favonius, and vocal with the spring carolling of myriads of birds; when a change—a portentous change—came over the face of nature. On Thursday late travellers were buffeted sorely by pitiless hailstorms. Then came a sharp frost, and at 7 a.m. on Friday snow was falling fast. The Meath hounds were proclaimed in Mr. Kelly's Hunting Calendar as due at Trim station on Friday, the 16th inst. Road or rail,

which will you choose? Both are almost equally convenient. For my own part I chose the paths of Macadam and a good hack; but then I was starting some nine or ten miles (Irish) on the Trim side of Dublin. The denizens and occupants of the gay capital naturally chose the latter, and a very large convoy set out from the Broadstone terminus about 9 a.m., setting down its load at Trim a little past 11 o'clock; and, as the distance is just about twenty-five miles, the shareholders of the line have no right, I think, to complain that their engineers take pattern by Jehu, and drive furiously or at a reckless pace. By the time I had hacked nearly half the distance, the snow ceased on the plains; but in front the Cavan hills were well powdered, while behind the eastern barrier of mountains gleamed one white mass of apparently newly fallen snow. Presently the sun shines forth in strength, and "Hark, hark! the lark at Heaven's gate sings." Bleating lambs, flushes of primroses, blossoming gorses, caucuses of crows, an odd sower going forth to sow — these and a thousand other things tend to remind us that Spring is upon us; that the pastime of princes will soon be suspended by natural causes. Be *carpe diem* our motto now, or we shall regret, with the unavailing regret of vacillators, our lost opportunities. We are now in Trim, under the shadow of its feudal fortresses, yet reminded by an air of pervasive comfort and *bien-être* that the Trimmers (I don't know what other title to give them) are not content to live in a storied past, but have due regard for present comfort and prosperity. The aspect of one or two of the peopled streets shows us that a great many are like-minded with ourselves as to seizing every hunting opportunity that presents itself. The flash of purple lights up the vistas, and beauty equitant and beauty charioteering are gladdening the ancient city. Whom have we here? Heading the squadron of arrivals from the station comes his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, mounted on a clever-looking bay horse, who, I believe, won first-class honours in the southern show-yard at Cork. His equerry, Captain Maurice

Fitzgerald, rides the "Kearsley roan," who has proved himself at home in all parts of Ireland. Next comes the Marquis of Ormonde from Kilkenny, though, I fancy, not further than from Dublin this morning; he is riding a very symmetrical grey belonging to H.R.H., who distinguished himself last year by winning the Carlow Red-coat race for his then owner, Sir Clement Wolseley, in hollow style. He does not belie his ancestry, paternal or maternal; the latter Arabian, the former derived through Lord of the Isles. Here is Lord Randolph Churchill; while Lady Rosamond Churchill is again mounted on Colonel Fraser's chestnut winner, Famous, and another lady steers his grey cup winner. Here is Colonel Fraser's yellow brake and most serviceable team, with the well-known roan wheelers, well handled among those tortuous streets by Capt. Chaine, late of the 10th Hussars. Of course it is full; so is Lord Howth's carriage, which comes in view now. Mrs. Dunville's pair of brown horses represent perpetual motion, for they seem to follow the hounds everywhere, and to thrive on excitement. Lord Clanmorris and his sister, the Hon. Miss Bingham, are riding two charming chestnuts. Lord Rossmore is on one of the same colour, of rare power and type. Captain Colthurst follows colour with a smart mare that has paid her way, racing very handsomely. Mr. Hone rides a brown mare that I hear the foreigners covet greatly, and I admire their good judgment. Captain Beecher rides a handsome son of William the Conqueror's. Captain O'Neal is riding Jonah, one of the neatest sons of Outcast to be seen, a large winner between flags, and a very perfect light-weight hunter. Mrs. Hanley rides a very fine bay horse. The Messrs. Carew (three) are always admirably mounted, and so is Mr. Brown, of Elm Grove, and Mr. Rose, from Limerick. Captain Chaine rides Regalia, a very handsome chestnut from Colonel Fraser's stable. I have mentioned a few celebrities among horses and their riders to give an idea of the character of the meet, which, though a large one, was not by any means a monster one, or over populous. Meath mustered strong

there; so did the Dublin Garrison, represented by the 3rd Dragoon Guards, the Inniskillings, and the Rifle Brigade; while Galway, Kilkenny, Limerick, Westmeath, Kildare, and I know not how many more counties took part in the fray. The hands of the town clock were nearing their junction at noon when we set forth, bound for Moneymore Gorse, to which I have before introduced your readers; full then—it was empty now. So, passing through a gentleman's grounds (Riverstown by name, on the slope down to the Boyne Water), we come to New Haggard Gorse, a small, thick parallelogram, where a fox has harboured for two seasons, and has baffled the pack hitherto, never having given the semblance of a run. To-day was his first and last—but I anticipate events. Carefully drawn by Goodall, and with much energy, the fox breaks away; but a fisherman is a lion in his path, so he retraces his steps, and it looks as if New Haggard Gorse was doomed to be non-productive of sport. However, in five minutes he is tallied away in a line parallel to the banks of the river, towards Mr. Odlam's large mills. Scent seems much livelier than might have been expected, and our fox has to run a couple of circles pretty sharp before he crosses the Boyne, which is deep here, I understand, and unfordable. The nearest bridge is at Trim, a mile or two distant; but there is no help for it, so we trot round very quickly. When the pack, however, are laid on the fox's line, they can make nothing of it—barely owning it at all. A knowledge of the country makes it pretty clear that he has gone on to Trimlestown Gorse, and thither we go too, but by a rather roundabout pathway. The hounds have no sooner touched this fine covert than they are racing away. The tail men were a long way in their rear, probably knowing nothing of the instantaneous find and as rapid departure. A dwell for a minute or two at a big double fence a few fields from the gorse, helps them ever so little. Over the double it is, and then away at best pace across a road. Who-whoop! who-whoop! they have rolled him over by a telegraph post—I know not on what townland, nor

does it signify; for Trim is very near, and there is the Trim and Athboy branch line of railway in front to mark the topography. A very sharp burst over a charming line; it only wanted distance to lend it enchantment. A second visit, and Trimlestown produced a second fox, who broke in an opposite direction, as if for Clifton Lodge; but he was lost in a few fields, which a heavy snowstorm of upwards of an hour's duration may account for.

"Through the hush'd air the whitening shower descends."

Patrick's Day in the morning generally becomes St. Silenus's Night, just as the ballad we recollect in "Don Juan" tells us that "Amundeville may be lord by day, but the friar is lord at night." However, one very pleasant phase of the celebration of Ireland's and more especially Meath's patron saint was a meet of the Ward Union hounds at "the Ward." I expected a very plethoric affair, but was agreeably surprised by finding only a manageable field gathered together, the Kildare hounds at Rathcoole having naturally depleted a good deal of the exuberant numbers whom the calendar devotes to idleness and enjoyment this day.

The proceedings began by trotting a mile or two in the Ashbourne direction, then turning into a farm to the left hand, where the enlargement had taken place. Our deer's strong point was speed, not directness. After a short ring she set her face for Fleenstown; then turned round, leaving Kilrue to the right hand, jumped the Dardistown Brook, brushed through some wooded knolls—part of Kilbride lands, I believe—crossed a by-road, and ran up over a nice bit of flat grass to Hollywood Rath, soon to be captured at Dunmickney. The pace, after the preliminary ring, was very good indeed. A second red deer was presently enlarged by the kennels at Ashbourne, and took us at fair pace nearly to Ballymadun village, crossed the road leading to the Naul, and touched on Garristown Hill; then, bearing to the right, he made his point as straight as a good fox by Herbertstown to Westown, where he committed, I hear, a quasi *felo de se*

by entangling his tines in a mill wheel, and there awaited capture and the cart. Having ridden the first part of the run, let me speak of that section with a grateful memory. I hear the second part was even more brilliant; by all accounts, Lord Rossmore saw it as well as anybody out.

On Monday the Westmeath executive invited all and singular to meet the county pack at the barracks of Mullingar, the nearest approach to a lawn meet in the vicinity of this midland capital. Seeing that no Marquis of Mullingar inhabits a feudal keep overlooking the good town in true baronial fashion, and that the lord of the soil, Lord Greville, lives at a distance of several miles, Mullingar accommodates itself wonderfully to the fitness of things venatic. Like Rome in this respect, if in no other, it is approached by many roads—paths of iron and paths of Macadam. Passengers from the west, from Galway, Longford, Athlone, Moate, the King's County, from Cavan, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, from Dublin, Meath, the Queen's County, and Kildare, find themselves injected more or less simultaneously, at or about 11 o'clock a.m. on the platform of the busy station, and from the station to the barracks is but a five minutes' drive in one of the many cars ready to compete tumultuously for your patronage. I do not speak from authority, but I am inclined to think that if the slowly revolving wheels of the Midland carriages were tardier and more stately in their revolutions on one of these hunting festivities at Mullingar, a latitude of fifteen or twenty minutes would be accorded to the belated, seeing that time would not hang very heavily in a well-found mess-room, such as that of the 1st Royals, now quartered at Mullingar, who have entered well to Westmeath and its many-sided sports, and welcome the *habitués* and casual sportsmen with true soldierly heartiness. On the present occasion I am bound to speak with respect of the exemplary punctuality of the Midland line; it enabled me to take a short drive into the good old town, which, though by no means beautiful or picturesque in situation or architecture, yet wears an

air of solid *bien-être* and wealth that many more pretentious cities might envy. Its banks tell of wealth and commercial enterprise; its handsome ecclesiastical buildings tell of the due appropriation of the harvest of commerce and agriculture; its shops are wonderfully good. Gordon's Ulsters (ought they not to be Leinsters?) are, I believe, the great original of that development of sartorial comfort; Watson's saddles are proverbial through Ireland; Mrs. Carroll's hotel, the Greville Arms, commends itself hugely to commercial men, who are no mean judges of creature comforts, and to many scores of hunting and fishing men from all parts of the world, who not unfrequently make it their base of operations while in Ireland. Mullingar, I fancy, looked at its very best this forenoon. A morning severely frosty and overspread with rime had brightened into a very glorious day, with a sun positively warm—somebody said scorching; the air was clear as in Western America; and in the translucent atmosphere every bit of the surrounding landscape was mapped out before you with the most vivid distinctness, as if seen through a magnifying lens.

Passing through the Fair Green, so well known to amateurs of high-class horses, we come to the barracks, which are not a whit less ugly or comfortless of aspect than most buildings of the sort in Ireland, contrasting so unfavourably as they do with the more modern and ambitious-looking poor-houses. There are about one hundred horsemen gathered together, and some twenty cars and carriages. Conspicuous among the latter is the Ballinagall landau and Colonel Cooper's waggonette, on the box seat of which I recognize that good sportsman so well known to his friends on both sides of the Channel as Joe Radcliffe, the recent owner of Salvanos and other good horses. Mr. Montague Chapman, the M.F.H., is not out to-day, owing to a death in his family; so Mr. R. Malone represents him—the Archon of the day, and a most popular one; needless to say, he is well mounted, for his horses are celebrities, as they ought to be to fulfil his requirements. The Hon. Mrs. Malone is riding a very perfect huntress,

The Creole—so called, I suppose, because she is a "coloured lady," the brown and black and mud stains on her coat giving her a rather mottled appearance at this time of the year. A rare combination of blood, substance, and activity, I have rarely seen a more perfect lady's huntress than The Creole proves herself in Mrs. Malone's hands. No meet near Mullingar would be complete without the portly presence of its hospitable and witty banker, Mr. W. Kelly, the life, soul, and promoter of all things tending to sport and good fellowship; and here is Mr. Kelly, with undiminished shadow and substance, riding a very fine brown horse, who has furnished into a pattern weight-carrier since last year. Captain Fosberry is on a grand-stamped son of Hospodar; Captain Grant and Mr. O'Reilly are very well mounted. Half-a-dozen of the Royals come out, among them Mr. Stephen Moore, well known in his own county of Kildare. There are four or five officers of the 19th Hussars from Longford and Athlone, among whom one recognized Messrs. Flood, Kenyon Stow, O'Connor Henchy, and French. Mr. Stow's chestnut, one of Baron Rothschild's stud, is a very high-class hunter, and his fencing struck me as very neat and effective. Time and space forbid my glancing further at the men and horses before us, so I will pass on to my first impression of the hounds and staff. For the condition and looks of the former, Matthews deserves a tribute of high praise. I had not seen them for some months—nay, not since last year—and the improvement in levelness and looks struck me at once; but work is their forte, and I have seen nothing this year more effective and capable than this pack. Servants' horses are the difficulty, and, to say the least, the weak point of most Irish hunting establishments. It appears to me the strong point of the Westmeath system. Matthews, the huntsman, was riding a bay mare thoroughly up to and over his weight, while her performance was very good. The same tale may be told of the mounts of the two whips, Mason and Toope. They were fresh, fit hunters, a bay and a chestnut, up to their respective riders' weights (one

rather over), and not requiring to learn their lessons painfully in the hunting field. Among the field was Mr. R. Rennell—the late master of the pack—on a grey cob.

We are in motion at last—rather late, too, for it is wearing on for noon when we leave Mullingar behind us, with Lough Ennel on our left hand and a thick bit of gorse at its edge—Kilpatrick our destination. On the last occasion of my visiting this neighbourhood the white horses were leaping over the perturbed surface of this inland sea; to-day it was a mirror. Then it held a fox; to-day it was blank. Mr. Lyon's park of Ladestown is the first of the residences which fringe the western shores of Lough Ennel. We drew the Lake Woods in vain, and were, I fancy, about to go away, when there was a tally, and every one commences galloping in a *ventre-à-terre* fashion. A few follow the flying pack through the park. The majority elect a road parallel to them, and their choice was a wise one, for the fielders get pounded directly, and Mr. Brabazon gives his followers a lead over a nasty drop fence into the road we are devouring so impetuously. Turning through a gate, we here pass the Belmont and Keolton grounds, and emerge into the country, to meet our first real obstacle in a brook, not very wide, not very deep, not very formidable in any way, save that it had rather bad spots of landing and taking off, and saddles were emptied here rather alarmingly fast.

> "Good Lord! to see the riders now
> Thrown off with sudden whirl!
> A score within the purling brook,
> Enjoying early purl!"

One of the whips' horses landed badly, and his rider is on his back. An ecclesiastic charges it directly afterwards, on a capital huntress of an impetuous turn, and misses his nether limbs by the narrowest of margins. After this, for about a mile or rather more, our track is over flat grass land, with fair banks and ditches, till we enter Dysart, seemingly an old, deserted park, with some good timber within its *enceinte*. The hounds are hunting steadily, and

at very fair pace, along a fence or hedgerow parallel to a road for, I should think, a quarter of a mile, when up jumps a splendid dog-fox before them—our quarry—as fresh as if he had not gone some two or three miles already at great pace. For a few minutes now it is a view through the park, till the fox disappears behind a hedge, and we lose sight of him. Then follows a mile along the lake shore to a plantation, where a dog of low degree intervenes, and our fox escapes through Ladestown to some district unknown. Making our way next over a large double, which proved that many of the horses out were well-educated hunters, we pass by Lynbury, and arrive presently at the handsome park of Gaybrook, Mr. Smyth's residence. Here the consensus of all hunting men says a find is a certainty. They judge by past experience, but to-day they are wrong, as we learn after twenty minutes' careful exploration. Galston and Rochfort offer rival attractions, but the show of hands is in favour of the former, Lord Kilmaine's park, and thither we trot on, basking and coffee-housing as we go in the pleasant sunshine. Our leaders have gone on very sharply. We, the majority, have taken matters too leisurely; for presently, as I am getting to the point of a friend's *bon mot* or anecdote, a stampede begins. They have found; they are off; so we gallop on in gloomy despair for half a mile or so, as the pioneers and the pack have just jumped into a road, pause there for a second or two, and resume their flight. A short cut of a field or two now puts us on terms with the foremost and best. Before us is a red peat moss of many acres; beyond it Green Hills, Captain Dames' sporting residence and kennels. Our fox was probably headed here, for, after a loop, he leads us back into the road, the avenue to which is over a low gate or a steep bank. Here we come near a village, which somebody tells me is Miltown. A double, which looks worse than it really is, delays us a moment or two, as it has one better spot in its extent than others, which all seem to affect. Then, for two miles or so, with the pack a hundred yards or more in front, we have a succession of

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THE HONOURABLE MRS MALONE.

charming singles, of fair hunting size, that you can race at. Presently we leave Enniscoffey church to the right hand, and gallop over the broad grass fields of Claremont and Lemonstown. Here the Hon. Mrs. Malone and The Creole were going in beautiful form till, I think, they turned too much to the left, thinking the fox had bent towards Galston again. In half a mile, as horses are beginning to feel the severity of the pace, we are confronted by a huge rampart—a boundary fence, known, I hear, as Tuite's Double. It is very high, very safe, and for a fresh horse not too formidable. With a tired hunter it is too much to ask—take your twelve or fifteen stone off his back, and he might jump it. Some got over at once; some had to wait and collect their horses; a few men rode it gallantly—amongst others Mr. Brabazon and, I believe, Mr. Bond; some found a way round it. At any rate, in another half-mile or so, we are standing in various attitudes, leading horses about, at the corner of the Gaybrook Wood, into which our fox has plunged. All agree that it has been a splendid unchecked gallop over a beautiful line. Some say the last run, from Galston or Gaybrook, I forget which—the run of the season—was better. All concur, however, in giving high praise to our chase of to-day.

Is it over yet? Who knows? Our hunters have now caught their wind. Let us see by trotting on to either corner of the thick square of woodland. They (the hounds) are "hunting strong," says a rustic; adding something painfully grating about their being at or near Mullingar by now. A small party of us, eight or nine, now gallop on over some rather holding fields, jump a few fences, drop into a road, gallop up a small hill, and there are the hounds, not a field off, turning towards us. I believe we are passing through Catherinestown. Mullingar is in front; beyond it the wooded knolls of Knockdrin Park. For a mile or so we hold on at a steady pace, when there is a pause for a second or two, till Roadster, who strains back, I believe, to the Fitzharding Gainsborough, and is a regular oracle, puts his brethren to rights. We

pass Clonmoyle, lately the residence of that good sportsman, Mr. Joly, long the hon. secretary to the hunt—now, alas! no more. Who-whoop! who-whoop! An unguarded sewer, at the foot of a large double, has robbed our pack of their prey.

I asked several men about the time of this fine chase. No one seemed positive to a few minutes, the find was so quick, the departure so sudden and instantaneous. I believe it was under an hour; and the distance covered was, I should guess, about eight miles. Who, after to-day's experience, will lay down any laws about scent? Light, gaudy, sunny, windless; one would have said it must be a bad day. I have rarely seen a much better; and hounds, for the most part, carried a fine head.

Tuesday was a *replica*, on even a grander and more gorgeous scale, of Monday. The frost (white) was harder and more searching—the sun more potent and pervasive. These were the atmospheric conditions which gave unusual brilliancy to a Kildare meet at Sallins on Tuesday, the 20th inst.

I am sure that, spite of Turks and Egyptians, foreign loans and American beef, Irishmen have ordered just as many scarlet coats as usual this year; but somehow they never appear during the rainy cycle. To-day a bed of peonies, an army of emperor butterflies, was a joke to the splendid array at modest Sallins, with its dreary canal and grimy buildings. I should think half the Curragh and Newbridge Garrisons were on horseback there—men of the 4th Foot, 7th Fusiliers, R.H.A., Engineers, 7th and 4th Dragoon Guards—while Dublin contributed an odd Inniskillinger and Rifleman of the Brigade. Among the visitors were Captain and Lady Maria Fitzclarence, the Hon. Mrs. Scott, Mrs. Bagot, the Marchioness of Drogheda, Mrs. Wakefield, Mrs. Moore, Captain and Mrs. Sheppard, Mr. Adair, Mr. Skeffington Smyth, Sir James Higginson and the Misses Higginson, Mr. Webber, and Mr. Power.

Mr. Mansfield led us off at once to Bellavilla Gorse, where the find was very quick, and the departure equally so. A sharp gallop through Longtown ended in a loss of our fox, without any prospect

of regaining the clue. We then returned to Bellavilla, and found a second fox directly, who turned towards Landenstown and the canal. We followed over the country till arrested by wire couchant but not concealed, over which some lead their horses, some rode. Those who sought and found another way were arrested by a gate, wired or tied to its post as usual. While we were thinking of how it should be opened, a one-armed sportsman—Mr. or Captain Burke, I believe—rode at it with great intrepidity, and smashed it for us. This run ended at about a mile "to ground," I think. Landenstown gave us a fox, who also got to ground directly. The next move was across country to a wild bit of uninclosed gorse—Gingerstown by name—to which I have frequently introduced your readers, seeing that it has been the point of departure of more than one sharp run. I must pass by some very amusing episodes *en route*—horses much preferring jumping *into* brooks to flying them, and sundry other minor mishaps. We are now overlooking the drawing of Gingerstown furze brake, and the hounds feathering gaily, from a railway bridge and other coigns of vantage. There he goes! a splendid dog fox; but how can he break through this cordon? How he did effect a passage is to me a mystery; but presently we are galloping away over pasture fields, up a lane, till we find ourselves in Yeomanstown demesne, the field broken up into skirmishing parties, extending over a very wide area. Two columns, however, show considerable coherence: one keeps along a road, the other tempts fields and fences, and both soon unite. It were uninteresting to jot down the various townlands we ran over. The bearings which gives an idea of the situation are the Liffey behind us, the Hill of Allen very conspicuous, though at some distance to our left. A mile or two is very heavy, swampy going; then we emerge on to high light-going grass land, which rises abruptly from a bit of red bog between us and Allen Hill. Then we bear slightly to the right, jump a number of nice wide flying fences, and find ourselves in a sort of wood, where sundry hats strew the ground, knocked of by the

boughs. A ruined house of imposing proportions is on the left hand—Donore; and if our vulp meant holding on to Landenstown and Bellavilla, he was probably baulked at the road, for he turned sharp to the right, brushed by Caragh Hill, and won his way to Mr. O'Kelly's woods, where, I believe, he got to ground. Osberstown Gorse was the next venture. It held as usual, and the path of the fox was towards Oldtown, Naas, *viâ* the canal; then in a line parallel to the Sallins road, and back towards the covert he came from; a fine day's sport, and most unexpected on such a day of glare and glitter. I fancy I am somewhat in arrear in my notices of Kildare and its hunting. Let me glance retrospectively and briefly at a few of their recenter days. The 18-milestone meet was a very large one, and most fashionably attended. Dunstown and Harristown proving foxless, the third covert broke the spell—the Blackthorns—sending forth a fox, who was killed after some forty-five minutes' hunting of an uninteresting order; the brush was presented to Lady Randolph Churchill. A Sallymount fox was equally commonplace, but escaped, and so did a gallant major whose horse got half-drowned in a bog drain, from which a rope brigade extracted him. Silliott gave rather a better-class fox, who got to ground, after a fair chase by Two-mile Chapel, in a burrow near Stonebrook.

The Flag-staff meet, Curragh Camp, began auspiciously with the pleasant hospitalities of the 4th Foot. The rest of the day was spent in vain efforts to hunt an Eagle Hill and a Martinstown fox.

Tinorin cross-roads day began with dusting a hanging sort of fox between the Gorse and Hughestown Hill, and killing him at last on the Golden Fort side of Tinorin.

Whitestown produced a fox who got to ground just as a run seemed very promising. Copelands being blank, Cryhelp was visited, with the result of a late run to the Scalp Mountain, *viâ* Lemonstown Bridge and Rathallin House.

The Rathcoole meet was a very fine one, but the sport *nil*, principally owing to hounds dividing on two foxes from Coolmine.

The Monasterevan meet on Monday afforded little or no material to chronicle beyond the existence of foxes in the right places.

In Louth, going back to the 13th, the pack did very little till they got to Bragganstown, whence they had a slow forty-five minutes *viâ* Dromisken, and a better twenty-two minutes later in the day from Lisrenny to Ardee to ground.

On the 16th they met at Duleek, and killed a fox from Gillanstown. Finding a second in Gaulstown, they ran him over a favourite Meath line by Ardcarne nearly to Ardcath Chapel—thirty-five minutes. In the Carnes there were a brace, and the pack divided, one division killing a vixen; the other ran theirs through Hilltown, over the Bradda by Beaumont, over the Nanny into Mount Hanover, when a snowstorm came on and spoilt a good promising run.

While Kildare was enjoying such exciting sport on Tuesday, Meath was engaged at Geraldstown in witnessing or taking part in some chases, the nucleus to which was a very handsome cup given by Mr. Preston, of Bellinter, for horses within a certain district whose owners pursue with his harriers. I hear on all sides that the day's chasing was most successful, and much enjoyed. Mr. Dunne, to whom I have frequently referred in these letters, was the chief winner; while next to him came Mr. Dundas, of the 3rd Dragoons, whose name must be familiar to all readers of *The Field;* while Mr. Kelly, to whom fell the consolation plate, has many friends among your clients. I hear champagne flowed freely, and all went off well, but for one sad episode—the sudden death, from heart disease, of Bill Ryan, while on his way to the course. A splendid fearless horseman, who had commenced his cross-country education in a hunting stable, turning hounds with rough unfinished horses, he was one of the best performers I ever saw on a somewhat raw, romping colt who wanted riding all round the race track, and yet could not be hurried off his staying powers. His integrity and respectful manner made him extremely popular

in an arena where the temptation to develop different characteristics is, to many, overpowering. Fame should not be silent on the merits of a rider who, with great opportunities,

> "Ingentes oculo irretorto
> Spectat acervos."

A spirited fox-chase is no bad precursor to a splendid ball—for splendour is, I think, the readiest and most effective word for the dancing pageant to which the Inniskillings bade their immense circle of friends welcome on Tuesday night, at the Exhibition Palace in Dublin. If the 10th *don't*, the 6th *do* dance, and are the cause of dancing in others. Not strictly a hunt ball, its components were mainly of the hunting guild, from H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught to Madam Chose, to whom a cotillon or a cramped country are equally welcome. Got up on a scale of colossal magnificence, it was a colossal and magnificent success; and this I make bold to state *pace* the pen-and-ink Peris (perhaps at the gate, disconsolate) who have recently been libelling our society. The next day the Ward Union hounds gave the dancers a splendid opportunity by their meet at Dunboyne: time 1.30. The assembly was a representative one, spite of the engrossing Aintree on your side the ditch—Kildare fox-hunters appearing in fair numbers, among them Lord Cloncurry, Mr. D. Mahoney, Mr. Rose, and Captain Saunders; while Carlow contributed Mr. Stewart Duckett. The enlargement took place at Nuttstown, with a wide drop fence to commence with. This led to some baulking, which is infectious among horses on cold days, perhaps among men—the *virus* reached myself and hunter—and so fast was the gallop for sixteen minutes that a check like this put us clean out of court and out of sight directly. The line was by Mr. Urell's farm, across the Black Bull road, over the Rathbeggan river—a "ducking pond" to-day to not a few—to Batterstown. A check occurred here, and then a view was gained; and then fast and furious the line led on past Ballymaglasson, past "the

Hatchet," and on towards Culmullen Hill, beyond which point I am unable to give evidence—a splendid gallop by all accounts.

Since sending off my Hunting Notes I have neither seen nor heard of anything very brilliant in Meath, Kildare, or Westmeath. In my next letter I propose to send you an *aperçu* of sport in Wexford, which has been continuously good. Lord Doneraile's hounds had, I hear, a very good day on the 22nd, when they met at Miltown, and, after some ringing hunting, found a good sort of fox in Boulard, whom they rattled through Shandrum and killed in the open near Fortlands; while on the same day Mr. Stackpoole's harriers entered to stag by the banks of the Shannon. Sir David Roche's resignation of the Limerick hounds is looked upon as so calamitous to the hunting interests of that county, that every effort will be made to induce him to continue to hold the horn for a further term.

On Monday last Mr. Filgate had one of the best runs of the season. It began at Charleville with some feinting round the plantations; then the fox broke away fairly for Castle Bellingham, passing through Boliss, Williamstown, Spencer Hill, and Kilsaran on the way, hustled through the park; here he ran through Millsdown and Mayne to Greenmount, probably intending to find shelter at Drumcar, but headed at the river *en route*, he ran by Annagasson, through Mayne and Millsdown, again getting into the garden at the latter place. From this he tried hard to retrace his steps to Castle Bellingham, but on the boundary fence he found his fate after one hour and twenty-five minutes of hunting pace—fast on the grass, moderate on the cold fallows, when the hounds were brought to their noses.

XXV.

"Should fox again so stoutly run,
May I be there to see the fun!"

Observation and observations—Somerville—Fifteen mile stag-hunt!—Captain Candy and Culmullen—The Ladies Churchill—Wexford—Galway—Kildare sport.

"Post Nubila Phœbus" is a saw old and hackneyed as the Latin grammar, but as true as the sun himself. Of the rain that rained every day, of the floods that invaded valleys and cities, not even respecting the home of "the freeborn Englishman" or the homestead of the farmer, we had enough in the very "open" season—so called, I presume, because the water sluices and supernal shower baths were never closed. For the last ten days or so we were beginning to forget our drenchings and preen our feathers in the glorious sunshine and clear air which each day brought regularly in its programme of cloudless skies and widened horizons. A new heaven and a new earth seemed to have expanded to our eager eyes. The dark cloud curtains which narrowed everything to an inky frame were suddenly rolled up or disappeared, and, in the beautiful words of Blanco White's sonnet,

"Lo, creation widened to man's view."

Light frosts every morning, hot sunshine for two or three hours after noon, westerly winds prevailing when there was any wind whatever, and, strangely enough, occasional dashes of snow or

hail, succeeded by summer-like weather—these conditions of the atmosphere and thermometer have been ours for far more than a whole week. All this reads dead against hunting; and yet there have been some very fine episodes in Ireland's hunting story during this period. Scent has been hot and strong for brief intervals, and hounds have run fast, while heavy men over fourteen stone have enjoyed the novel and unwonted luxury of feeling their horses galloping on top of the ground instead of through it.

It is a fortunate thing that all painful things come to an end sooner or later, for things pleasant and enjoyable seem to be of very brief duration, hardly giving us time to realize and savour them. "'Twas bright, 'twas beautiful, 'tis past!" seems just now a fitting epitaph for this glorious cycle thrown into one year. True, though poetical!

Friday morning, the 23rd, was very inviting and genial in its earlier hours, which were not under the spell of frost, as its brethren have been of late, and a ride of fourteen or fifteen miles to the meeting-place of the Meath hounds—Somerville, Lord Athlumley's fine park—could hardly have been commenced under pleasanter weather auspices. Soon a few light monitory showers presaged the deluge that was to overtake one in a few hours; but the wise of weather signs and portents seemed to think that the rain would hold off, for the day's hunting hours at any rate. Solitary rides at slow pace engender reflection and observation, if the air be clear enough to look about you, and you are not absorbed in the great business of keeping yourself dry and warm. My first observation was of a field of seeds into which I had noticed thirty or forty horsemen jumping off the road some three months ago, more or less; and there was every hoof track clear cut as if by an engraver's tool. I don't say the damage done amounted to much, but certainly some deterioration of the crop ensued from the stampede, and I believe "seeds" are nearly the only crop which a field *must* injure by riding over in wet weather; others they *may* injure, such as wheat, for instance, but I know that some men of

experience hold that the injury is generally inappreciable. With regard to "seeds," I fancy few men would voluntarily ride over them, except under such constraining necessity as keeping near hounds when running very fast, or the blockade of other avenues to them. Landlords, farmers, and all connected with the soil would surely avoid them if possible; and it appears to me that in many cases the mischief arises from a want of perception of the crop, which is taken for common grass or fallow, and neglect of education in matters rural; and to such men I address this paragraph, feeling sure that all hunting men have the interests of the farmers, their best friends and supporters, thoroughly at heart. My second was made in passing the grand stand at the Fairy House, where the sound of busy hammering was very audible from the road. How these stands have multiplied in our island! A hundred years ago, the gallows tree and its pendant ornaments were, we read, quite common sights for travellers as they posted along armed to the teeth to resist the Dick Turpins and Duvals of the road. Surely their absence and the substitution of these platforms is some evidence of the march of progress and the reign of common sense, though some hippophobists, mistaking abuse for use, *do* tell us occasionally in strong language that the racecourse is a stage to Tyburn and other *inferna*. My third was made after a survey of the splendid hunting panorama presented to the eye from Kilbrew Hill. True, in the foreground there was the surviving timber of a nobly planned park (now nearly ruinate); but the treeless aspect of the landscape, particularly to eastward, was the salient feature which commended itself to the hunting eye, giving strong and most direct contradiction to a standard and well-written topographical authority (Lewis), which says that "the country in general has a very furnished appearance, much resembling the county of Worcester or Hereford in England." Methinks natives of those shires would find it very hard to trace a resemblance. We are now at the entrance gates of Somerville, 11.30 a.m. *bien sonné*, and a glance reveals that the meet is a very

smart one indeed in all its elements. His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught has patronized Somerville to-day, with his equerry, Captain M. Fitzgerald. Lord Cloncurry and one or two more Kildare men are to be seen in the crowd, while Louth contributes a very large array of pursuers in the Messrs. Tiernan, Mr. and the Misses Gradwell, Lady Macnaughten, Mr. De Gernon, Mr. F. Osborn, Mr. Saurin, Mr. Blake, and many more. Among the onlookers are Lady Athlumley and party, Lady Fanny Lambart and the Misses Lambart, the Hon. Mrs. Donaldson, and Miss Waller; while among the ladies on horseback are the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Miss Cruise, Miss Kearney, Miss Smith, and Mrs. Chadwick.

A long tour round the park ends in nothing foxlike; so we pass on to Walshe's Gorse, in all certain hope and confidence of finding its small well-known tenant at home, and awaiting us as usual, with the probable result of a gallop by Athcarne Castle, some water jumping, and the mysterious disappearance of the fox, who has never been known, I hear, to go to ground, and is always *lost* when *found* ("*after being*" would be better grammar), leading some men to imagine that he climbs a tree after going a certain distance, though another theory may be possible—namely, that he runs along one of the many shallow brooks, and so kills all scent. There was no scope for conjecture to-day, for within the four corners of Walshe's Gorse there was no fox to be found. Crossing a road, we come to Ballymacarvey Plantations, where the drying winds have not affected the miry woodland roads, leading a noble lord out to-day to say, "Here's a specimen of English hunting;" and not without truth. It is good for Meath and Kildare men to meet these squelchy mud-ways *occasionally*, if it were only to make them prize their general absence from their territories more highly than they are inclined to. Slator's Gorse, a few fields distant, is now searched, and searched in vain; the mid-day malison of the Laureate is on our county.

> "Bad luck to the country! the clock had struck two;
> We had found ne'er a fox in the gorses we drew."

Luncheons, usually reserved till after the first run, are devoured now, for the cold, sleety rain, driven into us by a cutting east wind, provokes hunger. It is, I suppose, about or nearly two miles to Corballis Gorse by road. We fielded it, and found some very pleasant flying fences *en route* to keep our horses in practice. One of them, a river or dyke, was charged in spirited style by a hard-going light-weight, who has won his spurs in the hunting and chasing fields of his country; but horse and man did not sympathize—the latter full of jump, the former full of swerve and stop—the result was a bath, though a few drops more or less to-day mattered little. We are now by Corballis Gorse, a very happy-looking kennel. "There he goes!" says somebody, as the fox tries to break towards Corbalton—a bad line for the riding division: but he has turned back, and made his exit in a precisely contrary direction. We on the western side have to gallop fast, jump a fence or two, and gain the road; others ride a line parallel to it. An intersecting road is crossed, and the green large fields of Macetown are all around. But the fox seems to have baffled the pack, and, though they work on by Rathfeigh in a hesitating fashion, it is hardly hunting. The sport of kings ceases to exhilarate under our present conditions—no scent, and a needle bath of sleety rain making horse and man most uncomfortable.

Courtown was the fixture for the Kildare hounds on Saturday, the 24th, and the fame of Courtown and the railway opportunities brought a very smart crowd together—a large part of hunting Kildare, some Meath men, some four or five of the Inniskillings, some of the 7th Dragoons and 4th Foot; while among the visitors were Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Mr. and Mrs. Adair. The Ladies Fitzgerald and Lord Maurice attended the meet, which was nearly, though not quite, as numerous and fashionable as the last Sallins gathering. A night of storm and rain was succeeded by a very lovely morning, which inspired confidence, though lowering clouds in the distance and a watery sun ought to have been warning sufficient to bring the usual supplies of water-

proofs and over-alls. Few heeded the portents, however, and, if they had long distances to ride homewards, must have put an extra stone or so of water on their horses, for by noon the rain began, and for several hours Sheridan's line was literally true—

"Drip! drip! drip! There's nothing here but dripping!"

But I anticipate my tale of negations! Courtown House stands on a slight elevation, surrounded by belts of plantations of some extent. It is very pretty to watch the drawing all round, with little interludes of sunk fence and other jumping, and much galloping over the turf of the park. We had all these fair sights to-day, but no fox; so we jogged on further westwards to Ballycaghan Gorse, nothing doubting the certainty of a find. We were disappointed again; nor had we the usual excitement of a fast gallop over a mile or two of old turf, with an occasional fence before us to relieve the monotony of drawing blanks in our fox lottery; for our master led us some four or five miles round the road to Cappagh Gorse, when we learnt that the vixen had been let in, and her mate had gone abroad somewhere. Another long dreary jog takes us to Donadea Old Gorse, which is foxless. Bellavilla, drawn twice last Tuesday, is now the object of the inquisitors; and here I left them, thinking the game hardly worth the candle—the latter represented by a ride homewards of, perhaps, not much under sixteen or seventeen miles.

The sequel to Saturday in Kildare was as inglorious as its earlier passages. Bellavilla drawn blank: a fox found at Osberstown Gorse, and hunted a few fields—*voila tout!*

On the same day the Ward Union hounds enlarged their red deer near the kennels, and had a moderately good run of some forty-five minutes or so by Ratoath, Sutherlands, etc. I hear it was marred by the customary intervention of curs or sheep-dogs, and as I see by the proceedings in the House of Commons that there is an Irish gentleman who will not permit dogs to bark or

bite, whether 'tis their nature to or not, without condign punishment inflicted *propriâ manu*, I think 'tis almost a pity that the fear of such a canicide is not more abroad in this stag land. We went home drenched on Saturday; but such a night! Prescott draws a vivid picture of the *noche triste* spent by Cortes in the capital of Montezuma. The superlative degree would best describe the fearful gushes of rain and the paroxysms of storm which greeted our ears continuously.

"Luctantes ventos tempestatesque sonoras."

On Sunday morning the aspect of the vale country was about the same as in the worst period of this rainy winter—every furrow choke-full of water, fields in semi-mere, streams turned into swelling floods, the ditches brim-full, and the roads in places partially submerged; nor was there any sensible intermission of the rainstorm till late on Sunday afternoon.

On Monday the Ward Union hounds met at Dunshaughlin, somewhat contrary to expectation, owing to the state of the country; a very large and long special, with a tail of horse-boxes, bringing an immense array and a good many visitors to the station of Drumree, the nearest point to the trysting-place. The deer of the day was known to be a good one. He had extorted his freedom some weeks ago, and was only retaken after a very sharp pursuit and a stiff battle at the end of it, of which I think I made some mention in a previous letter. He was enlarged in a field near Rosetown, on the Navan road, and his course lay straight over some bottom lands drained by a deep ditch of widest proportions, which is no unformidable obstacle to even a very good hunter. Thence his path lay through Geraldstown, by the residence of Mr. W. Butler, a celebrity in the Meath field and a fugleman among the Ward Union men also—not very straight now, but rather zig-zagging through these wide grass fields, which are strongly fenced, and where the practicable or most practicable exit only allows two or three to jump together at one time. Thence he ran

to the verge of Corbalton, when he swung to the left and made Clonastown, over whose broad grasseries scent lay admirably, and the hounds carried a capital head. Skreen Hill, a great landmark in this flat country, appears very near on the right hand, but the line is leading away from it, and now Tara is reached. Thence a mile or two of easy slope leads into Bellinter, where there is a considerable check, and the deer is for some time lost—whether from sheep or cattle foil I cannot say—when news comes to Charley Brindley (who had been going in his old form on the celebrated grey mare), that "a cow had been seen swimming" in the broad, turbid current of the Boyne, now, owing to the tremendous rainfall, about as wide as the Thames at Hampton Court. The pack are brought over the nearest bridge, when they suddenly wind their quarry, who was sheltering under an arch; and from this point pursuit recommences *de capo*, ending at Churchtown, of fox-hunting fame, where this brave deer was safely taken, and this time somewhat passively—nor is this extraordinary, considering that the distance covered by hounds and quarry was not far short of fifteen miles, part of which was done at very good pace. Few remained to the end, and one or two of those who rode the last three miles were rather astonished at finding themselves pursuing again, as they had lost shoes and had them replaced in the Bellinter interval. I hear the last part of this fine chase was very good, and a view was only gained a field or two prior to the capture. I speak entirely from the gossip current the next day in the hunting field, as I only saw the commencement of the run from the vantage ground of a capital road, to which the pack ran parallel for some time. The middle and end of it were far beyond my ken, as, to catch a train, I had to turn my back on the galloping multitude.

The next day the Meath hounds met at Swainstown House, the hospitable residence of Mr. and Mrs. Preston, to which I have before introduced my readers, as the pack have met here three or four times already this season, I fancy. The day was mild and

balmy, the assembly numerous and upper ten-thousandish. The woods around the house did not hold a fox this morning, neither did those of Dunsany Castle or the Hill of Glaine. Culmullen was now our point; but to reach it, save by a very long *detour* which would probably throw you out of everything, sundry large fences have to be crossed—fences which tax a hunter's powers and education. They were all done successfully by the lords of the creation and the ladies of the creation, with hardly a blunder, a peck, or refusal of any kind—a fact which speaks volumes for the high class of hunters ridden in this widely fenced country. I said Culmullen was our destination, but in point of fact we were led first to Beltrasna Gorse, and by a course so strongly obstacled that a few of us who were fortunate in reaching Culmullen Hill quickly saw a widely dispersed multitude in the vale below us, galloping about just as if an outlying fox had been found *en route*, and a run was in progress. Five minutes undeceived us joyfully; for had it been so, we hill men were clean out of its vortex. All were shaping their course, as best they could, to Beltrasna, and at length the very scattered forces were reunited at its verge. The gorse quivers with hound music at once, and away he goes, a small yellow fox, running at best pace towards Summerhill or Moynalvey. A small watercourse crossed somewhat tediously, and a few charming flying fences left behind us, we are on a road, and the hounds, who have been grievously overridden and driven and rushed, are at fault. Goodall casts to the right, and recovers the line in five or six minutes; but, though we are on continuous grass, the start is too good for the scent, and it is slow hunting—slow nearly as the track of that coleopterous bugbear, the Colorado beetle—for a mile or rather more, till we find our unpressed fox has leisurely gone to ground in a thick scrubby hazel copse at Arodstown. Who-whoop! who-whoop! a good run well begun has been marred by impatience, as have many hundreds before it. The day has been warm and delightful up to this point. As we were nearing Culmullen a black cloud broke down on us in an

avalanche of rain, if I may use the term, so thick was its volume. Every stall in the yard was quickly occupied, every shed and every roofed bit of building about was full of horses, till the later arrivals were forced to shelter under some umbrella-like firs in the shrubberies. For the best part of an hour did these torrents descend pitilessly. Culmullen House, where Lord Rossmore and Captain and Mrs. Candy have their hunting quarters, stood admirably the siege and assaults of the hungry, the thirsty, and the drenched, larders and cellars proving both well replenished. As there seemed no intermission or sign of clearing, Goodall drew the wood in front of the house, and forced out of it a good sort of fox, who, turning first towards Beltrasna, got headed; then his course lay by the House of Culmullen, through a plantation, and then down the grassy vale, over a boggy drain we had crossed in the morning, up Crosskey's Hill, with a charming line of grass in front of us—every chance of a fine gallop, had the hounds, who seemed to carry a good head at first, been able to press their game. This power was, however, denied them by the coy, flickering scent, which died away to nothing as a violent snowstorm came on, and the fox of Culmullen probably occupied Glaine or Dunsany Woods that night. There was a fine show of horses out. Colonel Fraser's extensive stables had been requisitioned as usual for his friends' behoof, but among them all there was nothing I liked better than a brown young horse, by Will Scarlett, that carried Colonel Fraser himself. Like many good hunters, he hailed from Roscommon.

Wednesday was gloriously fine—a day "redolent of joy and youth," to use Gray's imagery—with the sounds of spring all around us, and a golden sunshine above and about us. The Meath hounds invited their admirers to attend their *levée* at Larracor, to which place I have already led your readers more than once, so I will only say that its features seemed unaltered since my last visit. The Boyne rolled in fuller and tawnier tide perhaps; the neighbouring Trim was more distinct in outline than

usual; Trubly House, where Cromwell is said to have stayed before his attack on Drogheda, had a few weeks added to its venerable dates. The Bray Mount, at the foot of which stands Larracor, was no longer in mourning, as its owner, Mr. Murphy, of whose very serious accident in the hunting field I wrote not long since, has made a rally for life, which bodes a success as unqualified as it is marvellous.

Owing to a disappointment about a horse, I was not able to follow the peripheries of a very fine but somewhat winding chase which ensued presently, Shanks's mare proving wholly unequal to keeping within either sight or hearing of the fleeting pack, which was soon borne beyond the limits of the small knolls and hillocks which abound near the meeting-point. Larracor had "blossomed in purple and red" very extensively for this festive occasion. The meet was a large one, decidedly worthy of the country and the occasion, among the visitors being Lady Randolph and Lady Rosamond Churchill and a large party from the Castle. Moneymore was foxless the last time we tried its limits; to-day it was tenanted by a sharp, alert sort of fox, who needed scant pressing, and who broke so quickly that I noticed from my hill vantage ground the tail men and loiterers, in their approach to the covert, being surprised as it were by the sudden stampede of the starters. Away they go! flashing past tree and hedgerow, spread over a large area. The land round Moneymore is somewhat low-lying, and the first thing I see from my observatory is a heavy pursuer on a clever bay, or rather off a clever bay, who had faltered or blundered in the soft peaty soil. They part company, and for him a horse-hunt takes the place of a fox-hunt. It looks like a repetition of the old line to New Haggard; but presently the fox turns to the right, passes through Knightsbrook, brushes past Reidstown Covert, and makes the lands of Galtrim, where, I hear, the pack checked for some minutes, regaining their destined prey by-and-by in a bit of wild gorse on a knoll known as Cuckoo Hill, where he jumped up before them, and was hunted on steadily—

fast and slow, good bits and bad bits—by Kilcarty Grange and Arodstown, till, entering Rock Lodge near Trotter's Gorse, he was rolled over in the open handsomely, after a pursuit which gave hounds, horses, and men quite enough for one day, and which was pronounced by some as *the run* of the season, which I have no doubt in some respects it was. To ride conspicuously well in such a field as Meath's is not given to many; and even when the gift and power are there ready and willing, opportunity is often lacking. To-day I hear the Ladies Churchill, piloted by an experienced Master of the Horse, had the chance offered them, and availed themselves of it.

The Ward Union hounds were at the Flat House on the same date, and enlarging near Caulstoun, ran their deer, "the Enfield doe," to Rathbeggan, where there was a check by the Glebe House. The line then led over Mr. Standish's farm, across the river, and along the valley to Mr. Allan's broad pastures at Batterstown; then it curved a little towards Crookstown, over Mr. Barry's farm, but from that point it led on straight to Mr. Leonard's farm at Culmullen; then it went downwards to the Mullagh, on the verge of Jenkinstown farm (where a view was gained), and so on to Kilmore, beyond which point there was a second check. After this came the last stage of a splendid chase, past Derrypatrick and right on to Warrenstown, where a capture was effected, after one hour and twenty minutes had been spent in crossing a pasture and dairy country unparalleled in our insular hunting grounds. I believe if I name Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. Waldron, Mr. Rose, and Jem Brindley as the best witnesses of the last few miles, I shall not have left many out who would have caught the judge's eye had he been *in situ*.

Strangely enough, the paths of the two packs, Meath and Ward Union, were very near each other to-day for a short time, and might almost have crossed and clashed.

I regret that the narrative supplied to me by an eye-witness of the close of the "great Dunboyne run," which I sent you as a

postscript, either failed to reach you or was crowded out by other matter. It is too ancient to refer to now.

Sir David Roche's hounds had, I hear, a capital run on Tuesday week, when they met at Coolrus Gate, and having drawn Garryfine blank, found at once at Lisduane, forcing their fox through Coolrus Wood, across the valley by Garryfine, and back by a parallel track to Lisduane. Here the fox was reprieved at the request of the field.

The Bellinter harriers had another brilliant day recently, a good chase round Lismullen Hills, terminating in a quick three miles towards Hayes, and crowned by a kill.

The Kildare hounds met at Branoxtown on Tuesday, and had a good forty-five minutes from the Blackthorns by Ardenode and Mount Cashel to White Leas, thence to Canny Court, ending in Tober Park, the last part rather a potter. Cryhelp held, but its foxes would not break, and snow came down apace. On Thursday, the 29th, they ran a fox very fast for nineteen minutes from Narraghmore Wood till he got to ground; and from Martinstown they had a long circular hunting run of some two hours to wind up "the day's doings." Turning our faces eastwards, or rather south-eastwards, we come to Mr. Beatty's country of Wexford, approached from Dublin by what I may call the "Scemmering" line of Ireland, which winds about through miles and miles of beautiful scenery, mountain, fell, and brawling torrents; while below you, at many a curve and angle of the line, is the ever-mobile ocean, as changeful of mood and aspect as the cloud-land above and around it.

The Wexford hounds met on Feburary 23rd at Bellevue, from whence they ran a fox fast and well for forty-five minutes, first in the direction of Blackhall, and thence round to Carigmanon, where he beat the pack by getting into a drain across the public road, and was left undisturbed there. From Donore Plantations they had a pretty half-hour after this, killing in the open. On the 26th they were in Ballinakeale, home of good horses and foxes (as

many of your elder readers more especially will recollect), and for the second time this season capital sport found its point of departure here. The hounds were no sooner in the covert than a brace of foxes issued from it into the open, running side by side for a mile or more, when they diverged in their paths, and the hounds fortunately settled on to the dog-fox, dusting him along for some five or six miles, through Wilmount to the verge of Castle Bridge, when they entered the beautiful Eden Vale. Here they were very near him, but a flock of sheep gave him a second good start, when he turned round, faced the wind, and brushed through Talbot's Plantations, saving himself in a slated sewer, after a fine run of one hour and forty minutes. Needless to say, such a good fox was respited for another day. On March 2nd they sent a fox along from Courtnacuddy to "The Master's Gorse," when he turned back towards home, but was rolled over in the open before he could reach it. On the 5th they found a good old fox in Carnagh, who, after a ring round the park, started for Tinacarrig, brushed through its rocky fastnesses, made Newbarne, skirted Collop's Well, and passing through New Castle and Kilbraney, got back to Carnagh, when the field interceded for his life. He had run for two hours and twenty minutes before the pack. On the 9th they met at Wilton Castle, Colonel Alcock's beautiful park; and the dog-pack had hardly entered the park wood before a fine dog-fox was viewed across the ride. He hung the woods for a few minutes, then started for Bree Hill, tried its earths, and finding them closed, made Bellevue, brushing through the bit of gorse by the railway. His next point was Galbally, in full view. He did not dwell here a moment, but broke away over that old-fashioned line to the top of Rahinstown Hill, where he gained a few minutes' rest. But the avenging furies are on his track. He jumps up in front of them, and for some three miles it is a race for life. Black Hall is his point apparently; but at the foot of Barmoney Hill the hounds change from scent to view, and this gallant fox is soon coursed down. The time was two hours and ten minutes.

The following summary of sport in Galway for a month will show that the East and Midland counties have no monopoly of good things:—

On the 6th ult. they began by hunting a vixen from Vermont, and had to whip off. Turning then to Abbert, they got off well with a sharp fox, who, crossing the road, brushed through Newtown, and held on for Farm Hill and Rye Hill, entering Monivea, where he was rolled over after forty minutes. On the 8th they were at Castle Halkett; found there directly, and ran into their fox in a few fields. Currofin Gorse was blank to-day, but Ballinderry sent forth a good fox through Annagh, just beating the hounds into Brook Lodge. On the 10th, at Pallas, Lord Westmeath's park, the hunting was more like cubbing, but it ended in a kill; while the day at the kennels of Moyode Park (the 14th) was chiefly devoted to hounds' work, the show of foxes being most cheering. On the 20th they were at Athenry, and getting on the line of a fox, found too late it was a vixen—a serious loss in that country. Coolmine, next tried, gave them a nimble runner, who led them by Grange Gorse to Cregmore, where they viewed their game, and coursed him into a rabbit burrow, the judge's verdict on the occasion being "*lost* by a tail." On the 22nd they met at Ballinderry, and did not find till they reached Eastwell, when the find and "gone away" were almost simultaneous. It is a race now over the fine grass farms of Ballintubber, Newgrove, and Doon into Wallscourt, and on to Dartfield, the pace testified by the tailing and loose horses about. The line now leads without any hesitation by Kilmeen, up the Hill of Ballydugan, where the fox got to ground, after one of the most brilliant runs of the season. Seven only appeared in the last stage; of the seven two were ladies. On the 29th they were at Monivea, and after some park-hunting went on to Belleville, where a brace of foxes turned up. After some little delay, owing to the pack settling to the vixen first, they dusted her consort along over a nice bit of country by Killiskea into Coolmine, forcing him through it into Cregmore,

where he found no resting-place either, and was rolled over about a mile further on. Strangely enough, the general complaint was the excessive heat of this day, which distressed horses and hounds greatly.

The Kildare season terminated with the month, a brilliant conclusion to an almost continuously brilliant series of chases. The meet was at Ballymore Eustace, and after some hunting at Elverstown of no particular interest, a move was made to Punchestown Gorse, whose fox led them hillwards at a capital pace, till the table-land of Russborough was reached, and he was pulled down by Lord Miltown's fine mansion. An evening fox was found in Silliott Hill, who was hunted at varying pace, in the figure of a horseshoe, till he got to ground in a burrow by the clump of trees overlooking Cryhelp. The Westmeath hounds claim a good run from Galston, and a second from Dunboden. The Ward Union hounds, after rather an unsatisfactory pursuit with their first deer on Saturday, enlarged another near Miltown, who ran much straighter and better over some three steeplechase courses, to a point near Balbriggan.

On Monday, half—nay, two-thirds perhaps—of hunting Ireland was at the Ward Union meet by the Fairy House, to witness the amateur and professional contests over that fine arena. The day and its programme were enjoyable in the extreme. There was an *obbligato* review of riflemen (Police) on the course, to awe the volunteer *riflemen* (and women) of the conveyancing order. The Meath hounds had a charming gallop of about seventeen minutes on Tuesday from Corballis, and the Kildare Red-coat race comes off to-morrow (Wednesday). Of these passages more anon, as the play-writers say.

XXVI.

"Their spurs wor maid o' siller, and their buttons maid o' brass;
Their coats wor red as carrots, and their collars green as grass."

Last scenes—Rath Gate—Corballis Gorse—Kildare Red-coat races—Carlow ditto.

Our hunting days are, alas, numbered! The handwriting on the walls proclaims it! The tapestry of nature on bank and brae bear witness to the closing season. Bleating lambs, murmuring wood pigeons, nesting crows, burgeoning thorns and shrubs; the very look of the grass fields all warn us that our gallops across country must be relegated ere many weeks—nay, even days—to next season. By the handwriting on the wall, I mean (reverently be it spoken) the gigantic placards which, usurping every vacant wall of publicity, announce the munificent prizes for running horses at Punchestown, Fairy House, and such popular chasing fixtures. By the tapestry of nature I mean the myriads of primroses, violets, wild anemones, and such like posies, which make a galaxy of every secluded bank.

"A primrose by a river's brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

Without claiming any special æstheticism for the hunter of foxes, we do maintain that the yellow nursling of the spring does mean something more to him than to Peter Bell, or whomsoever

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Wordsworth alluded to. It means that for some months to come the current of his life will seek other channels, that the groove in which he has wedged himself so pleasantly must be changed, that the horses who have probably begun thoroughly to understand him, and whom he now at last understands, must be either sold, or at any rate for some time parted with; that his pleasantest associations must be broken up, at least temporarily; that, so far as hunting goes, he must live in the past and future, but not in the present; but these regrets are becoming threnodic. *Carpe diem* is a better legend than any amount of moralizing! As yet we have a few days before the epitaph of the season can be written. Let us utilize them to the fullest extent. The going never was better, the serviceable and sound horses are as fit as hard work and old beans can make them. Foxes of the worthier and more immediately available gender never were fuller of "go" than at this moment. Our grass lands will carry scent for months to come, peradventure Egypt may still furnish us some corn—Gilead some balm! Is it the consideration of these evident signs and portents of a waning season that adds such tumultuous numbers to the meets just now? Spite of Parliament, spite of racing, and chasing "the blue fever," and the imminent metamorphosis of society from its winter chrysalis form to the full-winged butterflydom of April and May, the cry is—as of old at Dunsinane—"still they come." There appears to be no lack of horses to fill the gaps made by accidents and the wear and tear of a fearfully hard season; the best are perhaps kept in reserve for the Red-coat races or hunt cups. But the residuum is still very good, and, save the hunt horses, there appears horse power quite sufficient to go on for a month or two more.

I write on the last day of March, which is expiring in all the traditionary mildness and gentleness of the proverb; the day is cloudy, but warm. The blazon of recent snow is on the eastern barrier of hills. Let us cast in our lot with the Ward Union hounds, though it is too much to expect that after a brace of

rubrical days the third should rival them in brilliancy. The meet is at the Rath Gate, Ashbourne, so given on the card, and rather misleadingly perhaps; for the unentered stranger might picture to himself Ashbourne as an old fortified town, with walls, moats, and many gates, whereas it is a most insignificant village, glorified solely by the kennels and the paraphernalia and staff of the Ward Union stag-hounds. Nor is the Rath Gate very near Ashbourne—two miles, I should fancy, separate them; and when you get to the meet very little sign will you see of Rath, or Gate, or Rath-haus! At some cross-road nearly two hundred people—men and women on hunting thoughts intent, but far more on riding thoughts intent—are gathered together, while cars and carriages fill up the converging roads. The hounds meantime are grouped together on the far side of a difficult fence, safe from the heels of hound-loving and hound-hating horses. The deer has been enlarged on the left hand side of the straight road which leads seemingly to Garristown Hill; but parasites, in the shape of the inevitable and irrepressible cur dogs of the period and parish appear on the scene—hence the delay of some ten or fifteen minutes, which, in the clock-work punctuality of the Ashbourne pack, seems considerable. At last hounds are laid on in a field to the right of the aforesaid road, but scent seems most languid and very unsympathetic with the hard-riding men and women behind and all around the pack. One field, two fields, perhaps three fields crossed, and we come to one of those draining canals which so often perplex hunting fields in Ireland. This has turned our deer. A lane-way and a road lead us back to the kennels and Ashbourne village; but we pause not here, clattering through the single street and on for a quarter of a mile further in the Dublin direction till our deer takes to the country again, running across by Donoughmore Chapel, towards Robertstown; then more road, then a mile or two of country again, by Palmerstown. Next follows a view and a quick return to Ashbourne for about a mile and a half, and a capture. A most unsatisfactory run, and quite

below Ashbourne form; which was rather a *contretemps*, as there were a good many strangers out—Meath men, Louth men, Staff men, and some ten or twelve well-mounted ladies, including Miss Hussey, Lady Macnaghten, and the Hon. Mrs. Candy. A portion of the run was over the old Ashbourne racecourse. A second deer thus became a necessity, and one was soon forthcoming. I did not see any part of this gallop, but hear scent improved considerably as the day wore on, and the strangers had plenty of jumping and galloping over good lines, though never at best pace. Miltown was the scene of the enlargement, and everything went on smoothly and rapidly till the quarry ran into a house or shed at Nutstown, causing a delay of some moments. I should mention that its track up to this point had been over part of what once corresponded to the Fairy House racecourse. When enlarged the second time, the deer ran to another well-known race track at Springhill; thence on to a third—Naptown—a private course of Mr. Harper's; and, having crossed it, they held on for the Holywood Hills (which were rather a severe trial for horses after the gallop they had had) till he succumbed at the Bog of the Ring, a place between the Naul and Balbriggan, giving many of the field a very long ride home. The country crossed was stiff enough, and one or two brooks had to be cleared; but the larger fences caused no mishaps, while the smaller ones put down several good horses, as I hear—amongst others, one of Mr. T. Butler's, of Priestown, who was rather severely cut; I mean the horse, not the rider, who, hard goer as he is, may hope for some immunity now, having lost an arm and sustained I know not how many other casualties in these frays and forays after stag, fox, and hare.

There is a vast deal of animal worship in the world still. We laugh at the old serpent worship in the East; at the idolatry of bulls and cows in our own dominions; we despise the Philistines for their Dagonism; the culture of mermen, not mermaidens (which, we think, might, under extreme provocation, be pardonable), or laugh at the fancy of ancient spinsters for birds, for cats,

for plethoric pugs. In Meath our fetish is the fox; and I regret to say rumours reach me of wholesale iconoclasm through poison, laid probably for the tribes of wandering dogs who do such mischief to all kinds of sport in this our island, to game and hunting, and now to foxhood. I fancy a little organization and care, with due respect to prejudice and feeling, might greatly mitigate this very rampant nuisance, which the last dog law has hardly touched.

On Easter Monday the members of the Ward Union hunt, their executive and staff, met at the Fairy House at or about one o'clock, and there they welcomed the largest, the most fashionable, and the most orderly crowd that I think I have ever seen congregated together on any similar occasion. His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught was an honoured guest, so were the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough and a large Castle party. Due comments and criticisms on the racing and the gossip pertaining thereto will appear, I doubt not, in due course in your columns; so I will only remark that the verdict of the assembled multitude confirmed my own individual view of the entire success of the day's racing and the harmonious working of the gigantic machine. Liberality and organization are the salient features of the meeting. The first characteristic attracts the multitudes; the second disposes of them on their arrival. The race track is probably much the same as it was a hundred years ago, with the same brooks and big ditches intersecting pasturage plains; and has been so often crossed by deer and hounds during the season, and so often alluded to by me, that it were surplusage to say anything more about it now. Falls were rare, as is generally the case when the obstacles are large of type. Having said so much in laud (it were impossible, indeed, to speak or think of the meeting in other terms), let me remind the stewards of the apologue of the Roman or Sabine lady who fell crushed under the weight of the golden shields and ornaments which the warriors piled on her. Popular they have made this meeting; can they

meet the huge (spring) tidal wave which every year seems to swell into greater volume? The present railway and road accommodation is clearly inadequate for the vast numbers. Can they do anything in this direction? As one instance of the inconvenience occasioned by the want of sufficient exit accommodation, I may state that racehorses who ran in the later chases of the day found themselves blocked into the Fairy House fields by a barricade of jaunting cars until a very late hour, many having to travel long distances over roads bristling with fresh-laid stones in total darkness, footsore, perhaps, and leg-weary.

With another observation I shall conclude my remarks on the great Fairy House Meeting of 1877. A steeplechase Derby Day, if one may compare the third city of the empire and its racing festivals (so it calls itself, I believe) with the first. To guide, direct, and control, if necessary, the vast streams of vehicular traffic which passed and repassed almost incessantly for hours between the Flat House and the Entrance Gate, there was a fair force of our Irish Rifle Brigade (the police) very much *en evidence*, great-coated, walleted, and armed with their weapons of precision and sword bayonets. Had there been a design to storm the stewards' stand, to carry off the Lord-Lieutenant and his staff, or His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, "to unknown caverns vast," and keep them there as hostages till Home Rule or the charter of Erin-go-Bragh were formally conceded by the estates of the realm, I could understand these semi-warlike preparations; but Irish monster meetings have been distinguished for more than a generation for their exemplary conduct and peaceable habits; and it seems to me like "breaking a butterfly on a wheel" to use these magnificent warriors, armed to the teeth and stiffened by drill and straps to buckram consistency, in work of this sort, for which their habits and military instincts rather unfit them. The day was warm and muggy, with menacing showers (an April heritage), which did not descend. If a Gaul, I might say that sundry Pats had been congratulating the Emperor

of Germany on his longevity in beery Berlin; but perhaps the inspiration was more native.

Tuesday's meet of the Meath hounds at Dunshaughlin was in one continuous downpour of heavy, soaking, but not the gelid rain we have been used to of late weeks. There were a good many strangers and visitors at the trysting-place, among whom I may name Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Lady Macnaghten, Sir Thomas Hesketh and Captain Beatty from Cheshire, Captain Chaine, Mr. Coppinger of the Ward Hunt, Major and the Hon. Mrs. Donaldson, and the Hon. E. Preston, though I should add that the proprietors of the last three names should be termed rather *re*-visitors than visitors to these familiar hunting grounds. The Poor-house Gorse and its succursal covert drawn blank, Lagore foxless, the Reisk appealed to in vain—all this was a bad prospect for compensation for the dripping and drencing rain we were under. The fifth venture proved happier. A fox broke at once from the Kilbrew Sticks, ran fast up the old park hill, then doubled as quickly back to his starting-point, crossing the famous Kilbrew river, which might justly be re-christened the Beresford Brook. Three men or four alone stuck to the pack at this point, among them Captain Peter Lowe and Mr. Dunville. We, the great majority, wandered away, following some constantly shifting pilot over the shoulder of the Kilbrew Hill, over the line of water meadows and little water jumps, to find the pack among the Sticks again; thence we pottered on very unavailingly towards Green Park, till scent died away or was washed out.

Corballis Gorse was our next draw. It is so thickly matted that ten minutes may be calculated on here to evict a fox from his kennel. To-day he broke instantly, and, being a field behind—(and this field was, owing to the recent rains, a slough)—I had to gallop fast in hopes of a check. Macetown Chapel was the evident converging point of the starters, or, if not actually the chapel, a couple of fields close to it. Nearing these fields I could

observe a considerable pause in the proceedings, a grateful check we trust, and scent has been so cold hitherto! A couple of minutes revealed the cause of the waver in the line and the check to the gallant horsemen. Victor Hugo tells us that the *creux chemin d'Ohain*, which the French Cuirassiers did not take in their stride, but toppled into and rolled over one another, was *one* of the causes of the Waterloo disaster. It was no *creux chemin* here, but a mighty bank and small river that barred the way. When encountered first it was certainly a big thing in jumps, and one or two of our wonted pioneers and fuglemen failed to get *over*, and succeeded in getting *in*. One of these sportsmen showed me an easier path by which, after jumping a small fence, you met the bank on far easier terms. Next comes a ravine, a brook, a few light springy grass fields, then a fence which horses did jump and got over safely; but a very repelling one it was—a newly made bank, sharp at the edge, with a huge ditch on the far side. Fortunately, this was met at the end of about two miles over light grass or falls, and full stops might be anticipated very easily. This fence, too, was the termination of our rapid gallop, as it covered a sewer, into which our fox crept. I believe the master, Mr. Waller, and Goodall were as near the racing hounds as any other; and I hear also that a visitor, Sir Thomas Hesketh, saw it well also. The sewer referred to was, as many sewers have proved, a real nuisance; for fronting us was a beautiful line of light grass, without a chance of crossing plough. I cannot describe the sensation of jumping the awkward fence I have just referred to, or one's unfeigned gratitude to the good animal that bore you easily over it, as I saw a herd's house a few hundred yards higher, and near it a gate of passage.

Corbalton, the next covert tried, gave us a fox in the wood near the house and ornamental grounds; but this wood was encircled by a deep sunken fence, guarded by ornamental wire on the far side. This our fox struck in his spring, and, as he was close to the pack, his fate was instantly sealed. Fortunately he

belonged to the sex least necessary just now for the requirements of future seasons. What fortuned at Lismullen—Sir J. Dillon's park—in the way of hunting, I cannot relate; as when boots are full of water and stones of extra weight are on your hunter's back, it is no time, I think, to increase the nine or ten miles that separate him from his gruel and yourself from your hot bath.

I may mention here that the Meath hounds are being increased by a draft of thirty couple from Curraghmore, so that, in their turn, they will be forced to draft a good many very useful hounds, none more than eight or nine years old, and I mention the fact as it may be useful to new M.F.H.'s in the formation of new packs.

Wednesday, the 4th, looked, in its early aspect, as if it meant to follow the watery ways of its predecessor. By ten o'clock the black-cloud walls begin to disappear, and we had full assurance of the glorious day we since proved. "Where shall I spend a happy afternoon?" was a question to not a few on the morning I refer to. The Kildare Red-coat races were announced as to come off that afternoon, while the Ward Union hounds were due at Culmullen about the same hour. The scene of the former festive gathering was well-nigh twenty miles distant by road, the latter being six from my hunting quarters. What made me choose the former? Did distance lend enchantment to the prospect? Was I childish enough to despise the good things close by, grasping at the distant and dim and delusive? My reason told me plainly enough that the Ward Union hounds afford a red-coat, black-coat, and grey-coat race with the finest opportunities, and over peerless country, almost every time they go abroad, *plus* the enlivening strains and presence of a pack of hounds. Oh no! "It was something more exquisite still," as the poet phrases it; the certain reunion of the pleasantest hunting society within three or four counties; a feast of sport and a flow of soul, aided, of course, by the liberated gases which France sends to cheer us in our melancholy-haunted climate; royalty, aristocracy of birth, and

aristocracy of beauty; wit, wealth, women; a *recherché* pic-nic all around you; Ascot and Goodwood luncheons rehearsed in early spring. *Que voulez-vous de plus* my Sybarite of the period? If, with these aids, you cannot get on for a few hours in a pleasant atmosphere, I fear you come into the category of those "whom pleasures fail to please"—"Coldstreams," of whom the poet says a hard thing or two. But a word now about the sport of the day. A prize-fight locality, the scene of a projected duel—these are mysteries or quasi-mysteries for outsiders. An attempt was made to be equally mysterious about the *locus quo* of this Kildare gathering; I hardly think it gained its object. The present is, if my memory serves me right, the sixth celebration of these red-coated games in Kildare; and it is naturally desirable to vary the track occasionally, to prevent local sportsmen from gaining an undue advantage over visitors to their hunting grounds. For the last four years, and more especially the last three, the course has suited its purpose admirably, which I presume to be the testing of a high class of hunters—their galloping, jumping, and staying powers. Why none of the old tracks were chosen or modified, I do not profess to explain here; suffice it to say that, between hesitation and dissidence of views, the whole affair ran a great risk of falling through, had not the Baron de Robeck, ex-master of these hounds, thrown himself into the gap and undertaken to provide a course on his own and his friends' estates at very short notice. The selection may be briefly indicated as an outer ring to the well-known Punchestown racecourse, embracing in its extent much of the land run over in the frequent scurries from Punchestown, Eadestown, and Elverstown Gorses; the grand stand would have been a famous observatory, but I fancy it is being painted and furbished up for the approaching meeting, so it was not available for spectacular purposes. The ground, however, is so undulating that the scarlet riders, though lost occasionally to sight, were very soon before your glasses again, and the last three-quarters of a mile was visible to all.

I did not join the riders, or follow them on horseback; but I walked the track foot for foot, so may criticize it according to my lights and ideas. The going was *perfect*—light grass land, mossy in places, with two very small bits of plough in the entire circuit; yet it appeared to me to want almost every element necessary to test a hunter's powers. I was going to say there were no flying fences, but I am wrong; there were two walls to be crossed, one a trifle over two feet, the other did not attain to that exalted standard. There was a brook also; but as I walked through it almost dryshod, I should imagine horses did not jump it either, but ran through it. Flags were placed at intervals to be passed on the right hand, but practically in the two or three fair-sized banks that occurred, there were but one or two available spots; so that the field hardly ever spread itself out in wide line, but followed in almost Indian file, giving the good and lucky starters who had handy horses a great advantage. With the exception of the bank I have referred to, there was nothing more formidable than could be found at Lillie Bridge or the Messrs. Blackman's old trial grounds in South Kensington.

This was very much the case in the last mile, when men who had not worked to the front before had very little chances of doing so now; and yet, my animadversions notwithstanding, there is little doubt but that in both classes the best horses, or about the best, won. From the causes I have mentioned the races were much diminished in interest. There was little or no fluctuation or excitement. The fences and gaps that had to be done were well done by the clever hunters that competed, so that really there was little or no tumbling about to speak of. Lord Cloncurry, who has generally been in front through the season, whether in Meath or in the Ward Union country, won the Welter Race for 14st. hunters very cleverly with a really smart brown mare. Mr. Brunskill, of the 4th Foot, on Sportsman, ran him hard, though his honours, had he beaten his lordship, would have been barren, as he disqualified himself by finishing on the

wrong side of the flag. In the light-weight class Mr. Tynte's Sweet Pea won her second Kildare Red-coat race, though coming home the pride of place seemed entirely at the mercy of Mr. R. de Rose's Green Ribbon, ridden by Mr. Burke, of the 7th Dragoons. Will Freeman, the Kildare huntsman, won the Farmers' Race on a famous cob of Mr. Bayley's, after a hard finish with that determined horseman, Mick Keogh. Mr. Hanaway secured the Welter prize with the greatest ease by the aid of his chestnut horse, who is also a good hunter over a large flying country. The arrangements were admirable, even to the cards got up by Mr. Gray, of Naas, with his usual neatness and accuracy.

It will be, I know, a source of sincere pleasure to Lord Kilmaine—who set out for the East a few months ago—to read, in the land of tigers and jackals, how his gorse and woodlands at Galston keep on sending forth good stout foxes to the fray. The Westmeath hounds met there on the 29th, and found a leash or two of foxes on foot in the wood. One went away to the gorse, ran through it, pointing for Simonstown, but, bending to the right, made Enniscoffey, passed the tempting woods of Gaybrook to the left, holding on for Larkfield, ran across Catherinestown, and made Clonmoyle to a drain he knew of there, where he was safe, after a capital thirty-five minutes over a fine grass line.

Dunboden (Colonel Cooper's residence) was then drawn. The find was immediate, and the fox ran straight through Gaybrook at great pace, through Catherinestown, and thence to Peattstown, near Mullingar. Here he turned sharp to the left, brushed by Lynbury, and gained the shelter of Rochfort, where the pack was stopped, hounds and horses having had quite enough owing to the heat of the day. This last run was also over a beautiful line of grass, and lasted for fifty-eight minutes. I hear an officer of the 7th Fusiliers got a bad fall and broke his jaw-bone. On the 3rd inst. these hounds had a very enjoyable thirty-five minutes from Ballinacloon, through Clonhugh, into

Ballinagall, where their fox got to ground, scent serving the hounds right well.

I should have alluded to a very handsome recognition of Mr. Briscoe's long and most valuable services to all lovers of fox-hunting, recently presented to him in the shape of a substantial testimonial by his many friends in Tipperary, Waterford, and Kilkenny.

The Meath hounds had a charming evening's sport from Beltrasna Gorse on Friday, the 6th inst. I had to leave them when they were running towards Summerhill, carrying a capital head; but will hope to give you full particulars of a capital run over a charming line in my next.

The Kildare hunt winds up its season with a ball at Naas, the real finish of its sport. "'Tis true 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true."

Scent never was better perhaps throughout the season than in Louth last week; and, as a result, Mr. Filgate scored two capital runs—one on the 4th, from Townley Hall, and another on the 7th inst., from Tenure, to which I shall revert in my next letter. Mr. Beatty has been equally favoured in the south-east; and a fine day's sport from Ballinkeele on the 6th, and another from Warren's Gorse on the 9th, are added to the good things of his season. I shall hope to give a slight sketch of both days in my closing letter.

The Ward Union hounds had one of their finest chases on Saturday last with an outlying deer, who, however, succumbed to the distance and severity of the pace. Two or three more days will probably conclude their season, which is certainly not the least brilliant in their annals.

The Newbridge harriers ran a drag on Saturday last, which was a happy thought for the belated dancers of the previous night at the Kildare hunt ball. Given a fair scent, this pack can race; and I hear that, over a level grass country, they proved too fast to-day for their followers. Pursuers in the United Hunt country

(Cork) will rejoice to learn that there is every prospect of Lord Shannon's resuming the presidency of their country once more; but it is hard on the Vale of White Horse sportsmen (*and they are sportsmen*) to lose two such masters as Sir W. Throckmorton and Lord Shannon in so brief a space, just as field and master were beginning to understand each other thoroughly. The Carlow and Island and Duhallow hunts have wound up their season with a Red-coat race. "Placid Joe" and Captain Bunbury distinguished themselves in the former; Mr. T. Hare, M.F.H., and "Cigarette" in the latter.

XXVII.

"Farewell! ah, the word must be spoken!
To the chase I must bid an adieu;
See, here is the terrible token—
A carcass so black and so blue!"

Partings and meetings—Rahinstown—Hunt ball at Naas—Skreen Hill.

"When the bloom is on the gorse,
Think of summering your horse."

That is to say, if—after a calm, dispassionate review of his performances during the season, in which you give him credit for his good days, and debit yourself with a due amount of his shortcomings and failings, for which temper, nerves, impatience, and want of judgment were answerable on your part—you think he is worth the certain expense and risk of keeping through the weary months which must elapse ere he will be scurrying over the country once more, *te duce*. I commend the wise saw to any poet or poetaster who will write an epic on our lost Earthly Paradise. No! not quite lost yet; but slipping away from us bit by bit, till in a week or two those who remain in the country uninfluenced by the "town" mælstrom will feel like the lone one in the song—

"I feel like one who treads alone
Some banquet-hall deserted,
Whose lights are dead, whose garlands shed,
And all save he departed."

But, as another poet says or sings, "Enough of light and life remains for some gay soarings yet." Peradventure some bright passage of hunting may yet be in store for us, bright as was an hour or two in Meath on Friday last, when that persevering pack held one of its weekly *levées* at Rahinstown, the residence of Mr. R. Fowler. I have before now introduced your readers to this place, and endeavoured to describe its more salient features and aspects, so I will not go over the ground once more, merely remarking that the forenoon was bright and beautiful as could be imagined, for two or three hours after the dispersion of the morning's thick rime, and that a warm and cheerful sun lit up everything in the parklike neighbourhood into beauty and animation. Even the customary moke was not wanting to the scene. The meet was not a very large one, as meets have been recently, but a very slight analysis of the elements which composed it showed that the fox-hunting tide was ebbing fast, and that pursuers, who were stranded elsewhere, came to Meath in search of deep water and navigating facilities. From Kildare alone poured in a small current of the *désœuvrés*—among them H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught (who wore the Kildare livery), the Baron de Robeck, Mr. Forbes, Lords Cloncurry and Clonmell, the Hon. T. Scott, Captain Davis, Mr. F. Rynd, Lieut.-Colonel Forster; while among the peripatetic sportsmen, if I may coin the term, appeared Captains Crosbie, Fitzgerald, the Hon. B. Fitzpatrick, Sir R. Power, Captain Beatty, the Hon. L. White, Sir Thomas Hesketh, and Mr. Sutton — a name ever associated with the best Quorn traditions. If not a multitudinous assemblage, it was somewhat a representative one—many of the straightest-going men in Meath (and to go straight in Meath you must be well mounted) were out to-day, and the muster-roll included such names as Lord Langford, the Hon. Mr. Rowley, Colonel Fraser, Mr. Ponsonby, Mr. Dunville, Captain P. Lowe, Captain Chaine, Mr. R. Fowler, Captain Kearney, Mr. Purdon, Mr. Carew, Mr. Murphy. As were the men, so were the horses—

a *corps d'élite* that, having survived the disasters and mischances of a trying season, were as fit for the fray and as competent to take their part therein as horses could be for the most part. We may pass by the opening passages at Rahinstown. The covert there is most tenacious of its reputation for holding foxes, and was not below it to-day. But scent lay badly on the cold land around, and very little was done with fox No. 1. In the mean time Aquarius, or whoever the supernal water-bailiff was, turned his hose on the assembled sportsmen, drenching them thoroughly as they were starting for the second draw of Garradice Gorse, or Pratt's Gorse, so called because it was, I believe, presented to the Meath hunt corporation by the landlord, Mr. Mervyn Pratt, of Cabra Castle, whose services to fox-hunting in Meath and Louth are only equalled by the good offices of his brother, Mr. J. Tynte, of Tynte Park, to the hunting state in Kildare. It is a long path to Garradice, but part of it lay over green fields, whose barrier fences had to be jumped by all who proposed to see anything further of the day's proceedings. Those who are fond of seeking analogies between war and hunting might be tempted to name our point of assembly here "the field of the cloth of gold," for the sombre green of the matted gorse brake was quite hidden by the gorgeous sheet of golden blossom above it. Five minutes! ten minutes! not a hound note audible; but the place is a perfect thicket, and requires the most patient penetration. At last, when almost every one was beginning to fancy that blankness reigned here, a fox emerges. I did not view him myself, but his course lay over the most tempting of lines towards Summerhill, and over a series of four or five of the most inviting single fences that the heart of man or horse could crave, while the well-known double is left to the right hand. A prominent welter-weight rolls over at one of these wide ditches, like a rabbit bowled over while running down hill, but, beyond a few bruises, gets off uninjured. For a few fields all goes well. The hounds hunt merrily; then scent slackens, but men slacken not. All are full of ride, *Dona*

præsentis cape lætus horæ is interpreted into—"This is nearly the last day in the open; ride while you may, and if you are in front, don't give way one inch; if you are behind, press on with determination." So the pack were rushed on, and somehow—I will not say how—a promising run was lost. But if we had little galloping, every one had his share of large jumping, and our pioneers were H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught (on the Lawyer horse he is so fond of) and a Miss Williams, who handled a rather reluctant mount in really fine style. As the jumping and tumult of this gallop *manqué* (*manqué* by what means I think I could narrate an I would) is now over, let me moralize for a minute or for a paragraph, if it so please the reader. It is, I think, about a century since Thomson was a popular poet among our forbears; and those who fancy our mode of life has deteriorated—*laudatores temporis acti*—will do well to read his verses about hunting in his time, and the wassail that succeeded a good run in those good old days. After dealing with men, the bard turns to the gentler sex—

> "But if the rougher sex by this fierce sport
> Is hurried wild, let not such horrid joy
> E'er stain the bosom of the British fair.
> Far be the spirit of the chase from them,
> Uncomely courage, unbeseeming skill:
> To spring the fence, to rein the prancing steed;
> The cap, the whip, the masculine attire
> In which they roughen to the sense, and all
> The winning softness of their sex is lost."

Autres temps, autres mœurs, and what would this "bard of other days," could he visit us in the quick, think of a modern meet at a fashionable rendezvous in Kildare or Meath, where a bevy of graceful horsewomen always mingle with the masculine crowd, many of them quite as capable of taking their part in a quick thing or a real good thing as the best and boldest of the stronger vessels? In a very fine run in Meath the other day, three ladies were among the few up at the finish; and that not by luck, but by sheer good riding. In Galway I duly chronicled

the same feminine prowess, two out of seven being quite out of proportion to the numbers of the masculines and feminines riding and competing; while in Kildare's last day of the season a lady on a grey fairly outstayed many of the best men out, in a very crabbed and intricate line of country. Brilliant and severe that day was! I regret I did not do half justice to it; but it is too late to make the amends now. Beltrasna Gorse was now our last hope for repairing the day's dubious fortunes, the neighbouring coverts of Mulhussey and Colistown not being generally considered certainties; so to Beltrasna we went, deluged by rain on the way. At the covert-side the clouds seemed brightening, and it was evident than ten or fifteen minutes would bring us clear skies and intermission of the downpour; but the hour was late, and not a few were tied to time and social engagements, amongst others His Royal Highness. All this notwithstanding, Mr. Waller, knowing how scent brightens up after rain, refused to put the pack into the gorse till there was a cessation of the heavy rainstorm. Thus Royalty bowed to the majesty of sport, if I may talk so magniloquently. The sequel justified our master's precaution. No sooner were the pack inside the limits of the covert than a fox broke away, and now the pack get a really fair start of a field, and away they go in the direction of Larch Hill, much the same line as that taken by a fox from this same gorse on the memorable "Hatchet day." On this track, however, our fox does not persevere, but, turning to the right, describes a figure not unlike half of a capital S, then turns to the left, crosses the Moynalvey road, and sweeps onwards over some pasture fields, intersected by a few brooks and banks. It is now clearly a race, and men are riding accordingly. Lord Howth, who was well in front at this point, jumps a bushed-up wall, out of the road I referred to, and goes sailing away over the grass land in front. In half a mile or so the Dunboyne road is crossed, and here there was a pause of a minute or two; but the line is hit off almost at once on the far side, and now for some two or three miles the

chase goes on, unflagging and unhesitating, till Summerhill is reached. Thence the track leads into Agher, and from that park into Rahinstown, the meeting-point of the morning. But I hear the latter stage of the run was done at a pace little better than the crawl to which hard municipal law condemns the Jarveys in crossing Carlisle bridge in Dublin. The first part was admirable—fast—over a flying line, and not too long to become tedious or exhausting.

Among those who saw it well all through, I believe I may name the Hon. L. White; while I hear Mr. Sutton reports well of his first experience in this fair country with its large fences—unco' large of aspect at first, but really far safer to a good honest horse than their smaller brethren. Besides the heavy-weight to whom I referred, Lord Langford got rather a shaking fall in this gallop.

On Friday evening the Town Hall of Naas was the theatre of the Kildare hunt ball; nor was the theatre, which had been redecorated for the occasion, unworthy of the groups of fair women and brave men there congregated, *carpe noctem* their motto, as *carpe diem* had been some twelve or fourteen hours previously in the undulating grass fields of royal Meath. The citizens of Dublin, and, indeed, of Ireland, need not go afield to Vienna or Munich for their Tanzmusik, Liddell's band does its spiriting quite as featly as does Strauss's or Gungl's, and the soul that is not moved by the concord of his sweet sounds is fit for——a plough country, for his strains would create a soul under the very ribs of death. As usual, Killashee panelled the *spolia opima* and emblems of the chase into a fine trophy. The wines brought present enjoyment without subsequent penitence and remorse to the middle man, of whose susceptibilities we are so careless. The supper was good, hot, and well served. As for Irish beauty, so important a factor in the life of our empire—one of its strongest pulses—it is not like the algebraic x, an unknown quantity; and the curious observer may perchance have noticed that the *patres familiarum* who were and are the hardest of the hard over the country

contributed perhaps the loveliest of the lovely young dancers. His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, who seems to have inherited the almost ubiquitous gifts of his family, was no mere spectator of the gay scene (*spectatur agendo*), and I have no doubt that several "plighted youths and maids" found the soft glow of wax tapers and the delicious music just as pleasant as "April's ivory moonlight beneath the chestnut shade" of the poet's conception. A charming ball; we owe much of its happy *ensemble* to the care and energy of our hon. secretary, Mr. D. Mahoney.

Of lep-racing, the favourite sport in Ireland, there is no end just now. On my way to the peninsular games at Baldoyle, I saw by a local paper that two meetings of this kind had just been held in places of which, with some general idea of Irish topography, I had never, that I knew of, heard previously. It is no use preaching that these minor contests are injurious to racing as a national sport; you might as well initiate a crusade against alcohol among licensed vintners, or preach centralization among determined Home Rulers. One parish is as good as another, and a great deal better; then why should Kildare have its Punchestown, and Ballyporeen be left out in the cold? The racing at Baldoyle was decidedly good and interesting, but the soldiers and proletarians abounded. The ladies' stand was filled—or shall we say, with more truth, "graced"—by literally the upper ten. Captain Bates's fall was a heavy one, and he was struck, I believe, by a horse's hoof when on the ground, but no bones were broken, as reported.

Sport continues uninterruptedly good in Wexford. Thus, on the 6th, when the county pack met at Ballinkeele, they drew the Scough for a good fox, who had been, so to speak, reprieved twice. He was at home with one or two more of his fellows, and ran to the same rabbit-hole which had sheltered him before: then for thirty minutes, very fast, to the drain that had saved him on another occasion. From this point he managed to baffle the hounds for thirty more minutes, till they ran into him on the

pleasure grounds of Ballinakeele, from which point it is but a step to the hospitable dining-room of the sporting owner—a step taken by many, if not all, to their manifest comfort and refreshing.

On the 9th they were at Kiltrea Gate, and, after trying some spinneys *en route*, drew Warren's Gorse and a coppice wood blank, one hound only opening. The master, not satisfied with the result, tried again, and this time more successfully, the dog pack pushing out a good dog-fox, who made for Tombrick (a Carlow covert), but, before reaching it, turned to the right, brushed by Ballydaw, and held on till he made the boundary fence of Hollyfort, thence by the back of Movart Church, through Woodlands, till he got back to Warren's Gorse, then, running round its extent, did not enter it, but faced the mountains before him gallantly. He got as far as Mobury Mills, when he was rolled over, after one hour and forty minutes of hunting over a good open country, fairly fenced. The time up to the first check was an hour, and fast.

I could only allude to the sport in Louth last week, which was quickened by the good scent enjoyed by the pack. On the 4th, they were at Glenmore, and found a brace in the wood. One they hunted by Slakeen till he got to ground in a well-known place very soon. A couple of gorses now tried failed, but Mellifont sent out a fox, who turned and pointed for Slane, but got headed, and came back over Louth Hill, and on to the ruins of the old house at Ardagh, creeping into a sewer leading from them, which had escaped notice: a very fast ten minutes.

Townley Hall furnished the next fox, who took twenty minutes' hard hunting in the woodlands before he could be induced to break, when he ran a ring by Rossim and Mellifont, and through Townley Hall for Louth, getting to ground in a rabbit-hole by the banks of the Maltack river, after an hour and seven minutes' hard hunting.

On the 7th they were at Mooretown, and did not find till they got to Skedog, whose fox went away by Keeran and Tinarmore, over the top of Drakestown, by Blakestown to Belpatrick, where

he got to ground in a small sewer by the roadside, after thirty-eight minutes at great pace; bolted, and, given plenty of start, the pack ran into him before he could get to Skedog. Tenure provided a brace of foxes: one was taken along by Canliss into Collon Park, round it, and, getting headed in a bold effort to break, he held on past Tenure, till, at a late hour, Mr. Filgate had to stop the pack, who were even then full of "go."

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday were spent by many a person in the bight of land by Sutton which forms the Howth and Baldoyle racecourse—let us hope profitably, The hunting programme offered no very great counter-attractions. Nor was there anything very brilliant missed in the way of fox-hunting, Monday with the Meath hounds being more remarkable for its pleasant atmosphere than the character of the sport, which was all comprised in a sharp gallop of some eight or ten minutes. On the other hand, it was pleasant for the master to find his coverts well stocked with foxes, Grange-Geath maintaining its reputation for capability to keep both the Meath and Louth packs busy; and no accidents with vixens—always to be feared at this season—occurred to mar the enjoyment of the day.

The Ward Union hounds did not hunt on either Monday or Wednesday, to give the race-goers a fair chance; but their card proclaimed Taragh cross-roads for Thursday, and there was every anticipation of a crowded meet, had not the most persistent downpour turned many to other distractions. As it was, I think "the special" from the Broadstone only bore three horse-boxes to Drumree, while the majority of those who, like myself, had some nine or ten miles to travel by road, bowed to the rain powers and stayed away. And yet there were quite enough pursuers out to give a lively complexion to a pleasant meet in a beautiful country: some five or six red-coated Ward Unionists—the Messrs. Hone, Mr. Trotter, Captains Kearney and Colthurst, Lord Langford, the Messrs. Butler, the Messrs. Thunder, the Messrs. Wilkinson, etc., of Meath; the Hon. Mr. Rowley, Sir J. Dillon, Major and Mrs.

Johnson, Mr. and Miss Coleridge, Mr. C. Thompson, a few officers, a few neighbours—and, with that number even, the large pasture fields galloped over to-day need not wear too unpeopled an aspect. A word about the point of rendezvous. A cross-road, with a small building near it, which did and does duty, I believe, equally for post-office and dispensary functions. The real Hill of Taragh is a mile or two further on towards Trim, and overlooks Bellinter and the Boyne Water. As for Taragh's halls and Taragh's walls, I fear a Schliemann is required to discover them, for it strikes me Moore struck the chords of his own lively fancy when he created these surroundings for the national harp; and why should not a poet strike the "lyre" as well as any other instrument? Another hill which rises gently out of the surrounding greenery is Skreen or Skryne, for which a derivation is sought from the fact of the shrine of St. Columb having been brought over from England in 875, and deposited in the monastery here. Whether the ruined tower and church which crown the hills, and form a landmark for surrounding square leagues, belonged to the monastery of Eremites, is, I fancy, matter for archæological speculation. Lower down the shoulder stands a modernized castle, where Mr. Wilkinson, a staunch promoter of sport, resides. I did not see the enlargement, but presently a very large red deer was seen by the field trotting along towards Skreen Hill, the browsing cattle all turning to stare or follow the muckle beast. Little law was given him, as the hour was rather late, and his course lay under the castle I have alluded to, on towards Corbalton Hall. One large fence only had barred progress, a brook with a high bank on the taking-off side; but it was nothing for a well-trained hunter to drop into quietly. A line of gates and a single obstacle lead us now into Mr. Wilson's farm—Macetown, I think, by name—for our deer has turned leftwards from Corbalton Hall and its wide woods, and very soon a double of good proportions, but safe, stops the way. All horses get over well, I think, led or ridden, and the line, which seems to incline towards the Skreen ruins—by which

there is a perfect gallery of spectators—now wavers to the right, takes the road for a few yards, and then sweeps on past Lismullen Church and deer-park towards Staffordstown, till the capture of the deer follows by Corballis Farm. Fifty-five minutes, I hear, was the time, and after the first mile and a half the pace was good enough. This pack had a very fine chase on Saturday last with the truant deer, who resisted so many efforts to take her. Found near Killeen Castle, she ran by Gerrardstown to Kilbrew, an old haunt of hers, thence past the Reisk, across the Meath line by Pelletstown, till taken near Jenkinstown, and succumbing soon after, from the pace and great distance covered.

It is hard to collect one's scattered thoughts about hunting in the midst of the Olympic mud antecedent to Punchestown; but the most recent passages of any note are a fair ring with the Meath hounds from Beltrasna on Saturday, ten minutes of it good enough; a large meeting of the followers of Mr. Turbitt's harriers, amalgamated with a few couple of the Ward Union hounds, to hunt an Ashbourne deer, near Jenkinstown, on the same day, resulting in a very quick twelve minutes over Ballymaglasson (a course good enough for a steeplechase, and lots of brooks to jump in its extent, as Captain Bolitho, of the 3rd Dragoon Guards, knows full well), succeeded by a long hunting run, ending in a capture near Priestown; thirty-eight minutes in Westmeath on the 7th, with a fox found in Rosmount, and hunted by Clare Hill to ground; a sharp ten minutes from Crieve Hill; some hunting of no high character from Claremont and Galston Park on the 9th; a good hunt ball on the night of the 10th; some good covert-hunting round Knockdrin and its vicinity, ending in a meritorious kill; some more from Cooksborough; a testimonial to Mr. Carey Reeves, whose harriers have shown such good sport for several seasons to the dwellers by the Shannon's tidal waters. *Apropos* of the latter river, let me correct an error of mine last week in assigning Lord Shannon's masterly talents to Cork. They will find full scope still in the Vale of White Horse.

XXVIII.

"Inter arma silent leges (venaticæ)."

Louth sport—Bloomsbury pageant—Huge meet—Navan races, etc.

CAN you find room for a few faint echoes of the now almost silent hunting horn, while "The field a monkey," "Three to one bar one," and such like pregnant sentences, vibrate on the listening ear? Hunting virtually closes in Ireland with that Pan-venatic synod, Punchestown, to which masters of hounds and hunt servants repair annually, as does the Moslem to his Mecca (I believe both classes occasionally get fleeced, to pursue the analogy); but Meath still hunts the fox in out-of-the-way places—so does Carlow—an odd stag is quickened up by the music of harriers behind him, and "*Herring pictures*," are to be seen *horizontally* instead of *vertically* arranged. I cannot now expect you to insert a *résumé* of the results of fox-hunting in Ireland during a season which has perhaps never been excelled in the character of the sport it has produced, both for quality and quantity. The Curraghmore hounds have done the most execution. The Kilkenny foxes have maintained their old prestige for stoutness. The Limerick Vale never carried better scent to the confusion of horses and riders. Of Galway, Cork, Meath, Kildare, Wexford, Carlow, the Queen's and King's County sport, I have sent fragmentary accounts at intervals. A word or two now about Louth, where Mr. Filgate reports that he

has had decidedly his best season, though, owing to accidents, his forces were sadly crippled and reduced in numbers. On the 10th these hounds were at Cabra Castle, and after some woodland hunting, they drove out their fox past Ardagh Church, by the Baily Hill, into a cave where he was safe: fifty minutes, with scent breast high all through. Cabra Woods gave them more foxes and more hunting in the afternoon. On the 13th they were at Hilltown; found in "the Carnes," ran a ring, and thence on to Annesbrook, where a sewer saved the fox; the first twenty minutes very good. From Dardistown they had a very crooked ringing pursuit by Palgreen, New Haggard, Hollymount, and Claremont: one hour and five minutes in all, ending in a rabbit-hole. A good entry is reported to fill up the gaps and havoc of last season.

A paragraph recently appeared in one or more Dublin papers announcing that Mr. W. Forbes, of Callender, N.B., who has recently accepted the mastership of the Kildare hounds (not unsolicited), destroyed, by means of a bullet from a rifle, his chaser Wolfhall because he refused a fence when out schooling, thereby placing the equicide in the category of those cruel men of whom the Humane Society, and indeed the House of Commons, takes cognizance. Wolfhall is not dead, but very full of life; and probably the only form of veracity in the whole story was the possible fact of his having declined a fence. Dead he probably is to the race and chasing courses of Ireland; but a career of amendment is open to him in the hunting field, where he will probably perform ere long as an establishment horse. Mr. Forbes, I may state, has made some very happy purchases recently of horses of "character" for his hunt servants, and with his "summering" they may be expected to improve.

An Act of Parliament—of which some do expound the wisdom, some the fussiness, of our Legislative Assembly—protects the tenants of our meres and marshes and foreshores from molestation at the hands of the gunner and trapper for five or six months. Theoretically we pass a self-denying ordinance for our vixenhood,

and we are mightily concerned if any misfortune happens to the *gravidæ matres* who bear with them a burden of future hopes and joys. Practically we drive coaches and four through our own edicts, and trust to the chapter of accidents for escaping the perilous consequences of our efforts to grasp at intempestive sport. One of the last passages of spring hunting was enacted on Tuesday, the 24th inst., at Bloomsbury Bridge, some six or seven miles from Navan, the chief actors in the day's epic being the Meath hounds, led by Goodall and his lieutenants, and the *levée* or gathering who mustered to the parade ground or stage to witness the opening scenes of the play was really a splendid tribute to Meath, its grasseries, and its hunting prestige. I should mention for the information of distant readers of these chronicles, that Meath is *en fête* this week; that country houses are overflowing from basement to ceiling with guests from all quarters of our empire; and that the week opens with the Hunt Races at Navan over the Boyerstown course—a very fair sample and epitome of a Meath hunting country; that the meeting, blessed with lovely weather, was patronised by peers, patricians, and proletarians, to the last available man and woman in the county; that the "grand" stand was no misnomer, if birth, breeding, and beauty, with all fitting accessories, constitute grandeur; that the racing was exciting and interesting; that several of the men and horses who figured prominently in the season's races were again protagonists (let me state that I allude specially to Mr. Murphy and Cigarette); that the luncheons showed that cooking is not a lost art in Meath, and that the champagne which flowed freely was not perfunctory fizz, heavily charged with headache and remorse; that the arrangements were admirable, and that no *contretemps* occurred to mar them in a single instance; that Headfort was turned into a temple of Terpsichore on Monday night, with Marshal Liddell (has he not a *baton*?) for choragus. Time would fail me to recount a tithe part of the notabilities who flocked to Bloomsbury cross-roads. The Headfort party was a very large one, including the Marquis

and Marchioness of Headfort, Lord and Lady Castlereagh, Colonel Fellows, Captain Colthurst, Captain and the Hon. Mrs. Candy, Mr. and Mrs. Cornwallis-West, and Miss Fitzpatrick. Lord Howth contributed a very considerable quota to the gay scene, among them Major and the Hon. Mrs. Donaldson, Miss Cruise, and Captain Middleton, the latter of whom mounted on old Bel Espoir, who ran gamely, if not quite successfully, at Navan yesterday. Mr. and Mrs. Dunville brought their race guests to the meet, among them Mr. T. Hare, master of the Duhallow hounds. The complaint of the hour is the lack of horses. To-day's pageant of really fine hunters was a partial refutation of the cry; for really good animals seemed cropping up every minute, and where they all came from 'twere very hard to tell. But Colonel Fraser's stables seem, like Houdin's magic bottle, to be inexhaustible, and to adapt themselves to all sizes and weights, from the graceful Granny—rejoicing now in a fair freight (she carried her owner's colours yesterday)—to the resolute Tomboy, "with Atlantean shoulders fit to bear the weight," not of mightiest monarchies, but of Captain Hartopp, who, with Captain Boyce and one or two more, represented Leicestershire. Lord Clonmell was admirably mounted on Courtown; so was Mr. Hamilton Stubber on Younger Son, whose performances do not belie his good looks. Captain Moreton is on a powerful weight-carrier; in contrast to which, rides by Master Dunville on a very perfect boy's hunter of small scale, while Miss Taylour's Arab-like grey catches the eye at once. I did not count the ladies *en amazone*, but their name was legion, comprising nearly half the field. Bloomsbury is the residence of Mr. Barnewall, and overlooks the Blackwater valley. His coverts, spread over many parts of Meath, always hold foxes; so an outlying spinney near the river furnished our motive power at once. But covert-keepers, very zealous for their charges, do not encourage late spring hunting as a rule in Ireland; so in a few minutes a who-whoop! told us to expect no run hence to-day. The patch of yellow gorse on the side of Faughan Hill was next searched, and

yielded a fox instantly, who seemed minded to run towards the Episcopal Woods of Ardbraccan at first, but turned downwards presently, ran over a large pasture field, crossed the Donaghpatrick road, hung for a moment in a round clump beyond it, and then sweeping past Allenstown Park, crossed the Navan road, and worked back to Faughan Hill by the village of Bohermeen, scent being very catchy and fitful, as might be expected from a day most light, gaudy, and suggestive of dust clouds. The next fox turned up in one of the master's plantations. The fields about here are very strongly fenced, and gated in a style worthy of the shires, so riding ceases to be absolutely necessary to get to hounds; nevertheless, a few were determined to finish the season in the same straight style as they had ridden all through its course, and sent reluctant horses at a quickest hedge and ditch, which is somewhat different from the usual obstacles of the country. They generally declined, till Mr. Nugent's grey showed them the way over at a place—Ballybeg, I believe, by name. There was a pause for a moment or two; then, as the fox took us on to the railway, leading us over a nice double on our way to it, a run seemed highly probable; but after ten minutes or so, the zig-zag path of our quarry seemed like that of an anxious vixen; and when it led to the inevitable Faughan Hill, I for one abandoned the chase, and of its evening fortunes I can recount nothing. With some hunting, much galloping over velvety turf of the deepest emerald hue, and a great deal of sociable coffee-housing under the most delightful auspices, the day could not be called an unsuccess at this season of the year. A lady's saddle, borne by Little Wonder, minus the usual projecting horn, seemed to me a very sensible innovation on custom and tradition, and to follow the path of our naval architects in dispensing with needless masts and spars. Has a fore-and-aft "apron" been adopted yet by well-dressed hunting youths on your side the Channel?

Some Red-coat races near Carlanstown on Thursday brought the Meath season to a close. The Duke of Connaught and Mr. Tiernan were the winners.

XXIX.

"Farewell! a long farewell to all our hunting!"

Brittas and Jackson's Gorse—Meath Red-coat races—Knox and Kathleen—H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught.

When pursuit ceases in royal Meath, hunting in Ireland may be said to be moribund, if not actually defunct; and my tale to-day is of the final scenes of Meath sport in the week now hastening to its close. 'Tis true the "tambourine is kept a rowling" still, to use Mr. Pigg's symbolic phraseology, by such enthusiasts as Mr. Turbitt and Mr. Humphreys, who—

"Think 'tis no treason
To lengthen their season
By stealing some days from the Calendar, boys."

But after the middle of this present week most horses are consigned to summer quarters, or prepared for interviews with the veterinary surgeon; most pinks and leathers have been folded and put by; most hunting quarters have been deserted by their tenants, and country towns and villages mourn the bit of scarlet which, in the absence of the much-loved "army," brought colour and animation to their streets.

Brittas saw the last meet of the Meath hounds this season on Wednesday, the 25th ult. It is a roughish bit of wild territory; where stones and stone-faced banks recur too often to be pleasant to tender horse masters, and horses often retain the Brittas scar

longer than owners like. The field was not very different in its constitution and elements from that of Tuesday last, supplemented by many strangers and visitors, not a few hailing from the further side of the dividing streak of silver, so that we need not travel over this ground again. There was naturally a fox on the premises, but, as its ways were vixenish, he or she obtained the benefit of dubious gender in the cessation of pursuit. The next fox turned up in Jackson's Gorse (so named from its owner, Mr. Jackson, who makes periodical raids on southern and eastern racing fields with his cavalry, and brings back no small share of loot and spoil); for some fifteen or twenty minutes he kept the pack hard at work in the covert, and then made a wide ring, which, with fast bits and slow bits, occupied an hour and twenty minutes; though it was neither brilliant nor decisive, it was much enjoyed by the whole company out, and formed no bad finish to a season which has yielded to Meath and its inhabitants an immense amount of sport; no single day having failed to supply several runs, good, bad, and indifferent, according to the character of the scent and the instincts of the hunted one. As a proof of the appreciation of the hunting in Meath this year by all who took part in it, I may state that, so far as I can gather, there is not so much as a single desertion in the ranks of the visitors who migrate to its green pastures as regularly as storks, woodcocks, and swallows, what time the equinoctial gales are thinning the polychromatic woodlands; that such a thing as a grumble is unknown (or very studiously repressed); and that, were not the accommodation for hunting men and hunting horses somewhat limited and rather defective on the whole, their numbers would be materially increased.

Happy the country, I thought, as I surveyed from the lower pasture fields the black masses congregated on Kilbegan Hill on Thursday about one o'clock p.m., whose monster or mass meetings are attracted by the prospect of sport and sociability, and whose *raison d'être* is not the redress of wrong or grievance, or the

vindication of some ignored right and privilege! It is not very much more than a generation ago when a monster meeting in Meath meant a very different state of things, when the eloquent Tribune was "the starter" as well as "the judge," and when only one class of the community answered the summons to the trysting-place. How different was the scene of yesterday, of which I would fain give your readers some faint idea and sketch, leaving their own fancy and imagination full scope to fill in the details! The village of Carlanstown is some two miles from the historic and holy city of Kells, and the Hill of Kilbegan is some half a mile from Carlanstown. The land is not so rich or flat as in lower Meath, but stretches away into undulating steppes of grass, dotted with gorses, now golden of hue, every three or four miles. Such are Farrenalock and Rathmano, while small clumps of trees crown a few of the minor hillocks. From one of these higher undulations a splendid view is gained of the subject valley below, watered by a small beck or brook; and it was probably this natural stand-house, so to speak, which suggested the course for the Red-coat races to-day, which I may describe in a line or two as an irregular ellipse, the riders having to gallop some two miles and a half straight on end, round a small clump of trees, and then return and finish their contest close by the spectators' hill, behind which they started. There were in the entire course some fifteen or sixteen obstacles, fair types of the large sound fences to be met with in hunting through Meath. There were four or five flags placed at intervals to give general directions as to locality, but not to indicate the jumping points. Much was left to the rider's eye and instinct for a right line; and, as a matter of fact, the flags were too low and too small to answer their purposes fully, which was not only to give a notion of the bearings, but also as buoys to mark off a few bad boggy spots in the vicinity of the track. Before coming to the actual race, let me state that Meath—which always welcomes strangers to its borders—had sent out quires, if not reams, of invitations to men from all parts of Ireland to

enter their horses in this race; and if more sportsmen did not respond to the call, the season of the year must be considered, and also the fact that nothing short of a very high-class hunter would be fit to compete over a five-mile line of grass largely, if sparsely, fenced. A word now about the crowd on the hill of observation; it was indeed a very mixed multitude, but the mass was all leavened with the love of sport. Here was H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught with his equerry, Captain M. Fitzgerald, and a number of civil and military friends. Yonder whitely gleaming marquee contains the very large party from Headfort, including the Marquis and Marchioness of that ilk, and a number of visitors. Colonel Fraser's party from Bective is a large one, among them the Earl of Clonmell, Lord Cole, Lord Rossmore, Colonel Fellows, Mr. and Mrs. Cornwallis-West. The Earl of Howth has contributed a large contingent, including the Ladies Saint Lawrance, Captains Hartopp and Middleton, Major and the Hon. Mrs. Donaldson, Lady Athlumley, and Miss Cruise. Meath aristocratic, Meath bucolical, Meath laborious, is here gathered together to do honour to the day, and has turned a deaf ear to the echoes from the Curragh, and the voices of the horsey world now busily occupied at the great Munster fair.

The day was dark, with a piercing east wind blowing unchecked from the seaward, while a haze rather limited the powers of vision. Rain looked imminent, but it never came down; and nothing marred the enjoyment of a very festive scene to those who were wrapped up in furs and Ulsters. Time seemed to wait on the red-coated agonists, rather than they on time; nor was the punctuality by any means on a Punchestown scale.

A PRIVATE SWEEPSTAKE (by invitation) of three sovereigns each, to go to the fund; about four or five miles over a fair hunting country, to be named at the start; a cup will be given to the first horse carrying 14st. or more, and to the first horse carrying between 12st. and 14st.; every rider must wear a red coat, must not go 100 yards on a road, or inspect the course previous to the start.

Captain Kearney ns. Kathleen, 12st.	Mr. Knox, R.H.A.	1
Mr. J. Tiernan's Doubtful, 14st.	Owner	1
Mr. R. G. Dunville's Slythy Tove, 12st.	Mr. J. Roberts	2
Colonel Fraser's (V.C.) Famous, 12st.	Mr. Hopkins	0
Mr. C. Beresford's Fire King, 12st.	Owner	0
Mr. R. G. Dunville's Midnight, 12st.	Owner	0
Colonel Fraser, V.C., ns. Black Knight, 12st.	Captain Fitzgerald	0
Mr. Waller's The Miller, 12st.	Mr. W. Butler	0
Mr. St. George Golthurst's Convent Bell, 12st.	Owner	0
Mr. A. G. Nugent's Stafford, 12st.	Owner	0
Mr. A. G. Nugent's Yorrick, 12st.	Owner	0
Mr. R. Jameson's Ishmael, 12st.	Owner	0
Captain Kearney's Canary, 14st.	Captain Middleton	0
Captain Kearsley's Cockade, 14st.	Mr. Trotter	0
Captain Kearney's Banker, 14st.	Captain Hartopp	0
Captain Kearney's Cochinella, 14st.	Owner	0

At last all are weighed out, the 12st. men and the 14st. men, the only absentee out of the seventeen coloured on the card being Lord Rossmore's Bought In. Banker, a very fine hunter of Captain Kearney's, carried the enormous impost of 16st. 4lb.—Captain Hartopp's lowest riding weight; and I mention the fact as I see his stud is in the market; and those who bought his hunters when he left Ireland for India found their profit in doing so. Galloping past the gallery, the red squadron sweeps down the hill for nearly a quarter of a mile, and when they reach the first obstacle—a *real*, not a *chasing*, brook, with ten feet of water and steep banks—there is certainly a good deal of way on. Mr. Beresford, who has a great reputation for water-jumping, subsides bodily into the stream; three or four men and horses jump it in a slovenly fashion; and by the time the third fence is reached—a bank and deep drop—Captain Middleton, the Messrs. Nugent, and Mr. Beresford have to realize that they are clean out of the running. The going is beautifully light; like the lady in the song, who declared she left not the print of her footsteps behind her, the iron-shod horses hardly leave a trace on the elastic, springy sod. The Moynalty road is now reached, struck

in various quarters. It is a point of honour not to ride a hundred yards on a road; so, though a small wall some three feet high is close by, one gallant sportsman jumps over a crumbled parapet of a stone bridge with a deep drop, and goes on his way rejoicing, and fortunately uncrumpled. Near the clump of trees I alluded to stands a bank and hedgerow; a *percée* has been cut in this, with the stumps of the trees sticking up on the bank in rather a menacing fashion. All, however, get over safely; and now Mr. Dunville, who, I hear, had a commanding lead, has to pilot his followers back homewards, and the line he adopts is very wide, as he failed to catch sight of the guiding flags. The run home is about a mile, broken only by one small fence, as a few dangerous barriers had been prudently levelled. An obvious and inviting short cut leads direct to one of those little bits of bog or morass—"Curraghs," in the vernacular, I believe—more easily seen and avoided when hunting than in a sharp contest of this sort, when the keen, cutting wind is dead against yon; so Captain Maurice Fitzgerald, on Black Knight, when nearing home and well in front, plunges into the peaty trap, and is now only solicitous for his prostrate horse. With a stiff gradient, after four miles and a half done at very good speed, breeding, condition, and staying powers come into play, and in one or all of these essentials Kathleen, admirably ridden by Mr. W. G. Knox, R.H.A., showed a most marked superiority over her compeers, cantering in the easiest of winners; while Mr. J. Roberts, on Slythy Tove (Phœbus, what a name!) secured second place; Mr. J. Tiernan, on Doubtful, a high-class stamp of hunter, beat the other three fourteen-stoners easily enough; Banker wrenching his fetlock joint close to the winning-post. It is no secret that Kathleen and Black Knight are the property of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, and the win of the former was extremely popular among all classes, in whom H.R.H. has made loyalty a personal sentiment.

PRIVATE RACE (by invitation), to be run for by horses that never started for a flat race, hurdle race, or steeplechase, value nineteen sovereigns, and *bonâ fide* the property of farmers residing in the Meath hunt district; nineteen sovereigns to be given to first horse carrying 13st. 7lb., and nineteen sovereigns to first horse carrying 11st. 7lb; five sovereigns to second horse in each class.

Mr. P. Flood's Twist, 13st. 7lb..... 1
Mr. C. E. Walker's Hunting Horn, 13st. 7lb..... 2
Mr. M. Sheridan's Gambler, 13st. 7lb..... 3
Mr. E. K. Walker's Lena, 11st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. P. Rooney's Wasp, 11st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. P. Rooney's Bloodhound, 11st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. E. O'Brien's ——, 11st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. C. E. Walker's ns. Lady Hesse, 11st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. J. Martin's Comet, 11st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. C. E. Walker's Daughter of the Regiment, 11st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. J. Flood's The Chicken, 11st. 7lb..... 0
Mrs. James's Tally-Ho, 11st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. M. Tevlin's Nelly Grey, 11st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. P. Bradley's Rob Roy, 11st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. F. Lynch's Tara Lad, 11st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. G. S. Walker's ——, 13st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. J. Bradley's Shaun, 13st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. H. Flood's Aide-de-Camp, 13st. 7lb..... 0
Mr. M. E. Gilsenan's Watchman, 13st. 7lb..... 0

The Farmers' Race which followed was over the Red-coat race track somewhat curtailed, and two divisions, carrying respectively 11st. 7lb. and 13st. 7lb., started separately for the prizes offered. The 11st. 7lb. men ran at a very good pace, but I believe nearly all mistook or failed to see the flags coming home, which I again repeat were far too small for the occasion, and whether Mr. Walker got the stakes or not I cannot state. The heavy division ran at slow hunting pace, but came home in a cluster, Mr. P. Flood's Twist having Hunting Horn and Gambler close in his wake.

The many strangers present must have been greatly impressed by the reaches of fine hunting country spread out on all sides, such as few parts of the old world can present. The course was admirably chosen, both for riders and onlookers, and reflects the

greatest credit on Messrs. Waller, Kearney, Johnson, and Donaldson, who interested themselves and exerted themselves greatly to secure a successful meeting. The track lay mainly over two large farms, held by Messrs. Reilly and Masterson, and the property of Mr. Farrell, of Moynalty, who helped the committee in every way; it was all old turf, with the exception of a single field of seeds, which the owner freely devoted to the cause of sport. The whole thing was worthy of Meath.

Lord Howth, who has fairly entered to this pack, recently presented the hunt with a hound van, a necessity or semi-necessity not generally recognized in Ireland.

As the last bit of hunting "sign" ere the close season commences, a subscription list has been started with a view to present Mr. Edmund Mansfield with a testimonial in recognition of the sport he showed while master of the Kildare hounds. The limit of contributions is fixed at £2, and I name the subject, feeling sure that not a few who may be following their colours in India and the colonies would like to contribute; for, though eaten bread may be forgotten, and turtle and venison may fade from recollection, the love of sport is a joyous and ever-present memory, associating itself with the most pleasurable emotions of life.

"Plantagenet," in his *résumé* of the sport of the season, alludes to the absence of blank days in the Curraghmore, the Kilkenny, the Louth, and Wexford packs. Let me assure your readers that the Irish list might be greatly extended. In Meath and Kildare, for instance, I think the average of foxes found each day during the entire season could not be less than three.

Rawle, I hear, goes to Mr. Hamilton Stubber, in the Queen's County; and the draft of hounds which Mr. Forbes has gained for Kildare are much admired, but I cannot speak from observation.

The Baldoyle Flat and Steeplechase May meeting this week was, perhaps, the most successful in point of entries and attendance that the oldest inhabitant could say he recollects. It was chiefly

remarkable for surprises, and the upsetting of aerial castles of finance by home-trained and comparatively overlooked horses of the hunting class. Mr. Sewell's sale of hunters and steeple-chase horses the next day was well attended; but prices ruled so low that it seemed as if buyers had made up their minds to await the further development of the Eastern question before they embarked their capital in horseflesh. Captain Cosby's pack of fox-hounds were offered for sale, and with difficulty found purchasers at the absurd prices of one guinea and ten shillings a couple. There were some very useful and fashionably bred hounds among them; and even the seven or eight season hunters had a good deal of work left in them; a few lots were left unsold. As an indication of the unsettled condition of the money market, this sale was perfectly ominous.

"And those last 'notes' which never were the last."

As I cannot think them as sweet as the poet's kisses under the circumstances he depicts, I do not intend to inflict any more on your readers this season, their thoughts being more intent on war than on its mimic pageant just now. I will merely remark, in these farewell paragraphs, that Mr. Turbitt's harriers afforded the hard riders of the Metropolitan or Home Circuit last Saturday afternoon matter to ponder over during the recess. Hunting being unseasonable, a drag was resorted to (*desinit in piscem*), and two or three well-known yeomen farmers in that border country between the marches of the Kildare and Meath territories threw open their grass farms for the occasion, subordinating the interests of ewes, lambs, meadows, and fattening cattle to the imperative demands of sport and *a last ride*. A curdling east wind and a baking sun had parched up the sodden fields very much, and made the banks hard enough in places; but so judiciously was the track laid that horses never were once jarred by drops on to hard ground, nor did the tumblers find the soil different in consistency from that of midwinter. Starting from the Manse, it wound

round by Courtown, Laragh, and Baltracy, and leaving Maynooth to the right hand, finished the irregular circle near the starting-point. It actually followed the lines, so to speak, of two very good fox-chases of 1876–77 with the Kildare hounds, which originated in Courtown, and the flight was about seven miles, though some estimate it at more. Messrs. Hone, Hanway, M'Geer, Byrne, and Murland saw it well all through, and so indeed did most of the company, for the chief feature was the perfection of the selected country. The pace was not wonderful, though sustained, and could not be termed "weeding."

XXX.

The Finish.

I WONDER if any one was ever struck with the analogy between a crowd progressing by converging roads towards a fashionable or popular tryst of fox-hounds in our island and in our century with the *dramatis personæ* of a Canterbury pilgrimage, setting forth from "the Tabard of Southwerk," as described by Chaucer, in verse as immortal as the language which he helped greatly to frame and compose? There we have the knight, a worthy man, who "loved chevalrie, truthe and honour, fredom and curtesie;" with his son, a "yonge squier, a liver and a lusty bacheler"; then the "yeoman," and the "marchant with a fulled beard"; the clerke from Oxenforde, on a horse as lean as a rake; the serjeant of the law, "wan and wise"; the frankelein, of sanguin complexion, in whose train came the haberdasher, the carpenter, the webber, the deyer, and the tapiser; then the *shipman*, *the doctor of phisike*, "a very parfite practisoner"; the good wif "of beside Bath," a lady of large experience; the *plowman*, the *reeve*, and the *sompnour*. All these classes, modified to suit altered times and fashions, we have in our modern hunting train; but the large clerical element, of whom Chaucer sings so chirpily, is conspicuous by its absence in our day, for the pastors of the minority ever accounted "a hunter a vain thing," though a hack or a carriage horse was a different sort of animal; while the presbyters of the elder and more popular creed have recently been interdicted from

mingling in the chase, and have thereby robbed the procession of a very genial and pleasant element. In the poet's day the description of the monk ran thus—

> "Of pricking and of hunting for the hare
> Was all his lust, for no cost wolde he spare."

Now 'tis said that the Tridentine canon against "clamosa venatio" has been invoked; though possibly, if it were generally known that fox-hunting in these islands is a most orderly and even silently serious affair, that when once the overture begins no talking is allowed in pit or boxes, and that "il piu grand' omagio alla musica sta nel silenzio," things might be different.

In Chaucer's day there was no standing army, no Mutiny Bill, no reserves, no Horse Guards, no War Office. Hence we have no word-painting, and no nice subtle distinctions between the form of the linesman and the horse soldier, the staffsman and the guardsman, the gunner and the engineer, the lancer, the hussar, the heavy and the medium dragoon, all of which, invisible to the ordinary glance, are said to be perceptible and very appreciable by the really educated eye of man or woman to the manner born and taught.

In nothing, however, is the progress of the civilizing centuries more conspicuous than in the element of beauty and grace, which leavens all our great hunting processions, and lends them a charm unknown to the darker ages of Tudors and Plantagenets!

> "The world (the hunting world) was sad, the garden was a wild,
> And man, the hermit, sighed, till woman smil'd."

It is not our province to trace the gradual emancipation of lovely woman from the fetters which ignorance and prejudice originally forged, and which tyranny and selfishness rivetted for ages. One of her great triumphs is the hunting-field, to which she has won her way by sap and mine, by art and eloquence, and by the irresistible glamour of fascination. A generation or two

ago "a hunting woman" was a subject of conversation and criticism, oftener severe than otherwise, on the part of her sister judges. Walter Scott's "Di Vernon" was quoted by matrons with a shake of the head, and Thompson's unseasonable lines about hunting women came glibly to the tongue of ancient maidens. Now, a novel is almost incomplete without a hunting heroine, and Whyte Melville has proved by precept and example that prowess in the field is not incompatible with every feminine gift and grace, and that light hands and a loving heart are very often associated together.

The laureate wrote some rather inconsequent lines about woman being the *lesser* man. The sting is meant to apply *physically* and *mentally*. *Physically*, she rejoices and glories in the reproach, and so does her sympathetic hunter, who bears her nine or ten stone odd with willing courage and a light heart, when her brother's fourteen or fifteen would dishearten him from even attempting to make his best efforts and his gallantest struggles for pride of place; *mentally*, she scorns even to argue the question, and as to the subsequent line, she maintains that her passion for the chase at any rate, and her raptures for its glories, are quite as strong and more rational, if less absorbing, than those of the greatest Nimrod of them all, if the windows of Truth's palace were not always shuttered and blinded.

In Ireland, during the past two decades, hunting has become an absorbing *passion* as well as *fashion* with our womanhood, and, sooth to say, there are few rivals near the throne of Diana; for *society* in Ireland means hunting, and the chase is almost a corellation for society—hence to be away from the glories and perils of sport is to pass an exiled existence. To be an actor in the great drama is pleasure; to mingle with the leaders of the world of hunting is to be within the pale; to be without is—outer darkness. I suppose it was not always so, for Campbell makes the lowly born lover who had eloped with "O'Connor's pale and lovely child," say or sing, in picturing his arcadia in the west:

"I'll play, my Clarseach, by thy side,
I'll hunt *for thee* the fallow deer."

Now, his bride would hardly understand the rationale of her lord's deer-hunting while she was left to spin wool or weave fancies.

It is not many years since *the* one lady in Kildare, who hunted and rode as few have done since, was the cynosure of admiring eyes, the theme of every tongue. Now, more than twenty amazoned figures are to be seen at every large meet, and out of that number many ride almost faultlessly and fearlessly. As in Kildare, so is it in Meath, Louth, Limerick, Cork, Wexford, Waterford, Kilkenny, and all the great centres of our national sport; wherever you go you will be sure to find ladies who ride, and ladies who ride hard, well, and yet gracefully. It is sometimes a matter of surprise why, if so many ladies ride straight, as they do nowadays in Ireland, the crop of accidents is so comparatively small. The answer seems to be that, as the Vedda says: "Knowledge is masculine, faith is feminine;" and feminine faith in the capacity of her hunter sometimes does wonders which man's knowledge cannot effect !—faith, of course, coupled with good hands, a quick eye, and above all a capable horse.

The portraits which illustrate this volume are those of ladies, some of whom are by position and circumstance queens of hunting society; all ride often, and ride well to hounds; but I do not maintain that they are sole patentees of this most beautiful art—my contention is that they grace and adorn it much.

Vixi puellis nuper idonens et militavi non sine gloriâ.
HOR. *Carm.* lib. iii. 26 (freely parodied).

I've sung my who-whoop in Kildare :
I've hunted my last with the Wards.
John, hang up my flannels to air !
I'll play in the colt's match at Lord's !

My pinks you may now lay aside ;
Let my latchfords and crops line the rack—
No longer they'll tempt me to ride ;
Till the ides of November come back.

Diana, thou queen of fox-hunters,
Befriend me, thy liegeman, in town ;
Protect me from sharpers and punters ;
Teach Chloe to smile, not to frown !

THE WARD UNION STAG-HOUNDS AND THE BAYTOWN RUN OF JANUARY 24, *1877*.

I.

They may rave of the Quorn
And its native black thorn,
Its Whissendine, *Smite*, and its valley of *Soar*,

II.

But give me the sward
That enamels the Ward—
Be Baytown our meet and Moynalvey before.

III.

They tell us their Dixies
Can beat even pixies
In flying a brook, or in topping a rail,

IV.

But our own land of dairies
Is full of its fairies,
Who at singles and doubles or lochs never fail.

V.

Our fields are ungated,
But very well mated
With hunters that scorn such degenerate tracks.

VI.

Their pastures and glebes
Have all portals like Thebes,
And through them come hustling the crocks and the cracks.

VII.

Our ditches are deep,
But whenever you leap,
Throw your heart and your eye to the next fence in front.

VIII.

For if horse, or if man,
The black bottom you scan,
6 to 4 you'll go in—or you'll both "do a shunt."

IX.

In pipeclay they beat us,
In varnish defeat us,
In horseflesh or country we'll yield to no land.

X.

And if you are doubting,
My verities flouting,
On the Mullagh's broad shoulder just take up your stand ;

XI.

On oceans of prairie,
A sheep-walk or dairy,
By ploughshare unsullied its green virgin sod.

XII.

There you'll gaze with delight
On that beautiful sight,
The finest arena that hunter e'er trod.

XIII.

Last Wednesday they started,
Some 60 stout hearted,
From Vesington—eastwards—some five miles or more.

XIV.

Past Batterstown racing,
"The Hatchet" they're facing,
And now some two dozen are left at Kilmore.

XV.

The rest they are "ditching,"
While others are fishing,
In brooks and in dykes for the gear they have lost.

XVI.

But now 'twould be dreary
To tell of the weary,
Of Langford—of Hartigan—Lascelles—of most.

XVII.

Still onward pursuing,
Moynalvey just viewing,
They're passing Beltrasna's rich area of gorse.

XVIII.

Culmullen hill breasting,
Its gradient is testing
The lungs of each hunter—his heart and his force.

XIX.

Once again down the vale
Some half-dozen they sail,
For the pace and the fences have 'minish'd the crew.

XX.

To Warrenstown steering,
Dunsany appearing,
In front—pace unslackened—the quarry in view.

XXI.

But now Dumree is past,
And our red deer at last
Takes the road like a highwayman—sorely distrest.

XXII.

In a mile he is captured,
And greatly enraptured
Ride M'Gerr and Fitzgerald (the truth be confest).

XXIII.

They alone saw the ending,
Though closely attending
Rose, Brindley, Gore, Wardrop, Waldron in the race.

XXIV.

Rode the line well and truly,
Let's honour them duly,
And Turbitt soon after secured a *fair place.*

XXV.

Then here's to the farmers'
Wives, daughters, all charmers,
Who dwell in this beautiful ocean of turf,

XXVI.

And would it were my lot
To follow that pilot,
McGeer through its breakers—its billows—its surf.

XXVII.

And here's to the master,
Whom recent disaster
Keeps far from the field of his love and his fame.

XXVIII.

Here's to Leonard Morrogh ;
In sickness or sorrow,
We know that his heart is still true to the game !

XXIX.

And let the committee
Be praised in my ditty,
And here's to the Brindleys, good father and son !

XXX.

And here's to the Ashbourne choir,
Who can set hearts a-fire ;
And here's to the red deer who show us such fun.

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